DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 075 844 24 CS 200 502

TITLE	Norse Mythology: Literature Curriculum, Levels C-D [Grades Three and Four]; Teacher's Guide.
INSTITUTION	Oregon Univ., Eugene. Oregon Elementary English Project.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.
BUREAU NO	BR-8-0143
PUB DATE	71
CONTRACT	OEC-0-8-080143-3701
NOTE	95p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Allegory; Curriculum Guides; *Elementary Education; Grade 3; Grade 4; *Literature; *Literature Appreciation; *Mythology; Short Stories; Symbols (Literary); *Tales
IDENTIFIERS	Norse Mythology; *Oregon Elementary English Projects

ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide is intended to introduce elementary school students to Norse mythology. Nine myths are included: "The Creation," "Yggdrasil," "A Meeting of the Gods," "The Fenris Wolf," "Thor's Journey," "The Theft of Thor's Hammer," "The Death of Balder," "The Punishment of Loki," and "Ragnarok: The Sun Sets on Asgard." The guide also includes suggested teaching activities, questions for class discussion, and numerous illustrations. (See related documents CS 200 500-501, CS 200 503-508.) (DI)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 075844

Literature Curriculum, Levels C - D

NORSE MYTHOLOGY

Developed under contract with the
United States Office of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

by

The Oregon Elementary English Project
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon
1971

CS 200 502

Norse Mythology

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page number
The Creation	1
Yggdrasil	6
A Meeting of the Gods	10
The Fenris Wolf	20
Thor's Journey	29
The Theft of Thor's Hammer	51
The Death of Balder	55
The Punishment of Loki	61
Ragnarok: The Sun Sets on Asgard	65

NORSE MYTHOLOGY - INTRODUCTION

What are myths? Imaginative stories, created by people out of their own experiences, in order to satisfy their curiosity about themselves and the world they live in.

Norse myths, like the Greek myths, were at first oral and of anonymous origin. Like the Greek myths, the Norse myths reflect a view of life as adventurous, courageous, and hopeful.

The universe as conceived in Norse mythology, however, is a somber place. Asgard, the home of the gods, is a cold and mist-shrouded place (as is the Scandinavian landscape during its icy, dark winters). How different from the perpetual spring on Mt. Olympus.

The Norse gods are a grand and powerful lot. But there are many evil forces beyond their control. The Norse gods know, from the prophecy of the Fates, that evil forces will someday destroy Asgard and all creation. In spite of such bitter knowledge, the gods continually fight against the evil frost giants and the mysterious natural forces about them, for to wage war against evil, in spite of certain defeat, is heroic. To die heroically in battle is a triumph. Courage, they feel, can never be defeated.

The humans in Norse mythology find life harsh indeed. To live, they know, is to suffer. Rarely do they experience a warm moment and its accompanying joy. Humans are constantly engaged in one war or another. Those who die bravely are carried to Valhalla, the great hall of the gods, in Asgard.

The only hope offered to the Norse gods and humans is the prophecy that after the forces of evil destroy all of the present creation, a new world and a new heaven or Asgard will be created where happiness will reign forever. Meanwhile the present inhabitants of the present universe must accept constant suffering and certain defeat and do so bravely. Only then will they be triumphant.

Your students may be interested in learning that most of our names for days of the week come from gods and goddesses in Norse mythology. You may want to discuss the name of each day as the appropriate god or goddess is introduced in the stories.

1. Wednesday - Woden's Day - Woden is the southern form of Odin (ō′din), ruler of the gods.

2. Friday - probably from Freya's (frā′ya) Day - Freya is the daughter of Odin.

3. Thursday - Thor's (thôr) Day - Thor is the fierce Thunder God.

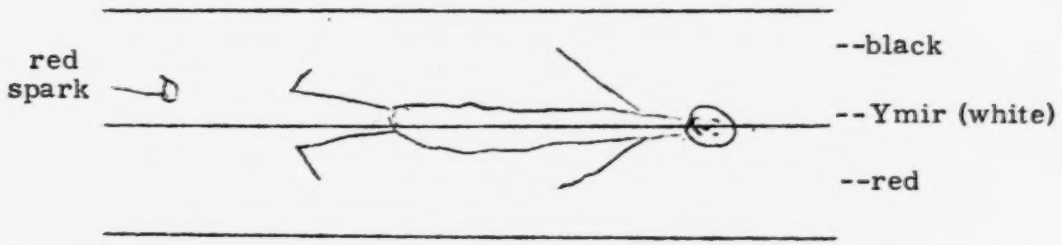
4. Tuesday - Tyr's (tēr) Day - Tyr is the God of War.

If your students are curious about where the terms Sunday, Monday, and Saturday came from, have them guess. They will probably be able to figure out Sunday (Sun Day) and then Monday (Moon Day). Perhaps they have heard of Saturn, the sixth planet from the sun; but the planet, like Saturday, was named after the Roman god Saturn, who was the same as the Greek god Cronus, father of Zeus and his brother and sister deities.

THE CREATION: Part 1

(From the beginning through the paragraph ending "Tall forests of ash, pine and fir sprouted from Ymir's hair.")

In order to help make the ideas on the Norse Creation more vivid for your students, you might line a large wall space with butcher paper (a horizontal piece of black along the upper half to represent the frozen cold; a horizontal piece of red along the lower half to represent the raging fire.) Cut out a huge frost giant from white butcher paper and hang him up against the ice and fire. (See Activities)



To introduce the term Norsemen, ancient people of Scandinavia, show your students where the Scandinavian countries are on a world map. Explain the concept of the earth being warmer near the equator and cooler the farther away one goes. Point out Greece and ask the students which area they think is warmer, which they think is colder, Scandinavia or Greece. Explain that it is very cold indeed in the Scandinavian countries. Relate the terms Norse and north. You might want to ask your students what they know about the ancient Norsemen or the people of the Scandinavian countries today, and have a short discussion about the points they bring up.

Explain that the ancient Norsemen, like the ancient Greeks, wondered about how the world came to be. The story they will hear today tells how the ancient Norsemen thought the world was created.

Point out the bulletin board and explain that the Norse people believed that before there was anything, there was only ice (the black) and fire (the red). Introduce Ymir (ē'mir), the first Frost Giant, who was created by a spark in the ice. Then ask, "If you were going to use parts of Ymir, our Frost Giant here, to create the rest of the universe and everything in it, what would you make out of his nose? How about his teeth? His ears, his hair? etc. As your students suggest things, list the body part and their suggestions on the board.

When students' ideas begin to run out, tell them they are to find out what parts of Ymir the ancient Norse people believed were used to make the universe and what these parts were used to make.

VOCABULARY

Odin, Hoenir (hō′nir), Lodur (lō′dur) - brothers

Aesir (ē′sir) - the family name of the gods

chariot - two-wheeled car drawn by horses

steeds - lively horses

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. What parts of Ymir's body were used by the Aesir to make the world? (List them on the board.)

2. What was made from each part? (Put on board.)

3. What else did the Aesir create? (Put on board.)

ACTIVITY

Suggest that your students pretend they are the three brothers, Odin, Hoenir, and Lodur. Ask for volunteers to cut off the appropriate parts of Ymir, and using crayons, scissors, even paint, transform the body parts into whatever the story had related. Other students may wish to make the great cow, or some other aspect of the creation mentioned in the story. When each student is done, ask him to place his created object on the bulletin board.

THE CREATION: Part 2

(From the paragraph beginning "The Aesir gods looked upon the worldthey had made" through the end.)

By looking at the bulletin board, review the first part of the creation story. Ask such questions as:

1. Who was the first frost giant? (Ymir)

2. What was there before the gods created the universe? (Ice and fire and perhaps Ymir and the cow)

3. Why was Ymir important in the Norse creation? (His body parts were used to create the universe.)

4. Who created the universe? (Odin, Hoenir, and Lodur)

Ask your students to pretend they are Odin, king of the gods, looking around at his universe after he and his brothers have created it. How would he like what they had created? What might he say to his brothers, Hoenir and Lodur?

After some discussion tell your students that Odin was not happy. Ask them why Odin might have been unhappy. After a few guesses have been offered, ask them to listen to the second part of the Norse creation story to find out why Odin was unhappy.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

Ymir

Odin

Hoenir

Lodur

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why was Odin unhappy? (He was lonely, for no one looked like him.)

2. What did he do about it? (With his brothers he created man and woman from two ash trees.)

ACTIVITIES

1. Ask your class to pretend that they are the Aesir. They will create a man or a woman from a tree using crayons or colored pencils and scissors. (You might go outside and look at some trees and discuss how they look like people and what kinds of people the trees remind them of, as a warm-up.) Have them draw or cut out a tree to represent a person. When the students have cut out their people, ask students to pin their creations along the bottom of the bulletin board.

Perhaps some eager student will volunteer to make an Aesir to pin up at the top.

2. Ask students to write a continuation of this myth, telling what the trees who became humans thought, how they acted, and what happened to them.

3. The Norsemen under Eric the Red and Leif Ericson sailed westward and finally reached North America. They built settlements probably in Newfoundland, and in other places. They also met the Indians, whom they called skraelings.

Imagine how the Norsemen explained about the skraelings to their children. See if you can write a myth that would give a Norseman's idea of how and where skraelings came from. The skraelings were good fighters. Which Norse god do you think the Norsemen would say created them?

THE CREATION

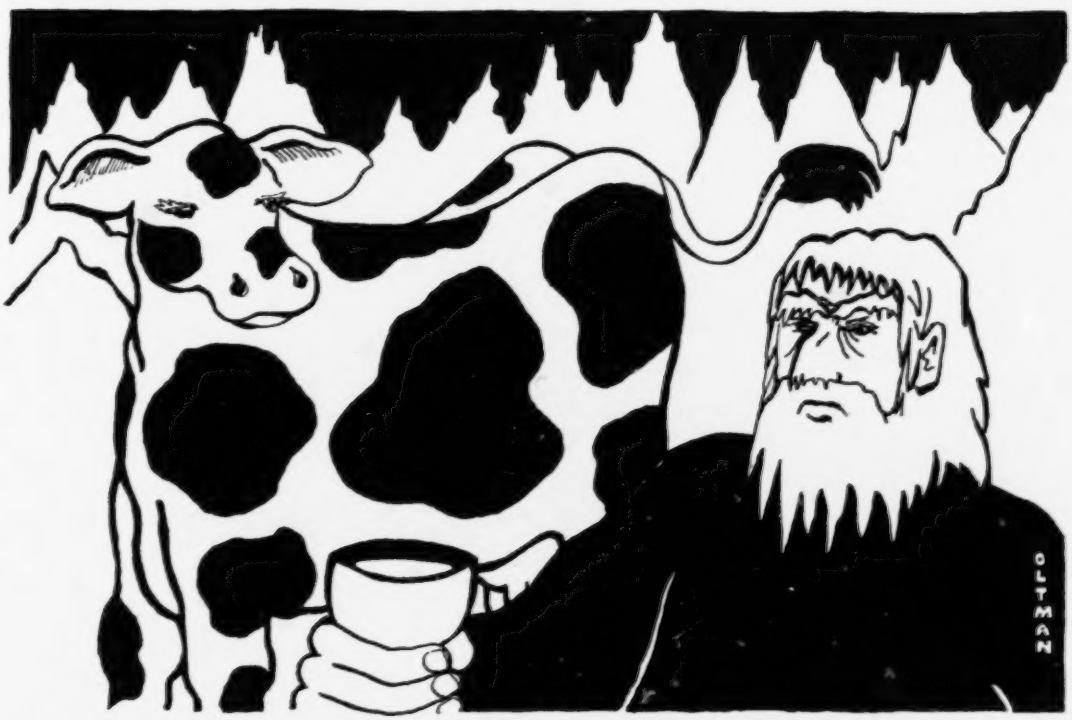
The Norsemen of long ago believed that, in the beginning, there was no sun and no moon. There were no stars to flicker in the deep black well of heaven.

Brooks did not murmur on the flowered hillside. No birds sang in the air. For the earth had not been made yet.

There was only a place of raging fire and a place of frozen cold. Between the two stretched a huge gap of space.

Within the gap, crystals of ice and bits of flame whirled together endlessly. As they whirled, the warmth of the flame struck a spark in the ice. Life appeared in the emptiness. Ymir, the first frost giant, was born. He was huge and ugly. His terrible voice echoed across all space.

There also arose in the emptiness a great hornless cow whose milk Ymir drank until he had grown to a fantastic size.



Then Ymir fell into a deep sleep and slept away the centuries while the warmth of his body brought forth new creatures out of the ice. These, like Ymir, were wild and ugly frost giants. Soon they had children of their own, great monsters like themselves.

While Ymir slept, the great hornless cow licked away the ice in search of food. As she licked, her tongue melted the frozen waste into the shape of a face. On and on she licked, forming head and shoulders, arms, legs, feet, and hands until, finally, a new giant was born.

How different he was from Ymir and his monster brood! For this giant was beautiful beyond all telling, with blue eyes and hair like honey gold.

This giant had three handsome sons--Odin and his two brothers. These three were the Aesir gods and had the power to create a world. But first they had to get rid of Ymir.

The three Aesir gods and Ymir fought a wild and terrible battle that roared and boomed across space for ages. In the end, however, the Aesir gods managed to kill the frost giant. They pushed his huge body out into the gap in space. The blood that flowed from his wounds turned into salt water and formed the oceans.

The Aesir gods then made the earth from Ymir's body. His bones became the mountains; his teeth became huge boulders and stones. From the curve of his great skull, they made the sky, and the sparks they fastened inside it became stars.

The greatest spark of all became the sun and a weaker spark became the moon. And so that all the earth might be warmed and cheered by these, they put them each into a golden chariot drawn by six fiery steeds, the sun in front, the moon behind.

But the frost giants were filled with rage at what Odin and his brothers had done. The giants were creatures of darkness and the frozen waste. They hated the sun and all things warm. Two of them took the shape of wolves and chased the terrified horses forever across the sky. In this way, day and night began, and you can still see the sun and moon move across the sky as wolves chase them.

The Aesir gods then sent gentle rains and soft winds to play over the earth. And in the sun and rain, Ymir's beard sprouted into grass, covering the earth with a rich, green blanket. Tall forests of ash, pine, and fir sprouted from Ymir's hair.

The Aesir gods looked upon the world they had made.

Seeing how beautiful it was, they created spirits to watch over all things. No lake, mountain or waterfall was without a spirit all its own. They filled the seas with fish, the air with birds, and the forest with animals of every kind.

But still Odin was not happy.

"Hoenir," said he to one of his brothers, "I am pleased with what we've made. And yet I am lonely."

"Lonely?" said Hoenir. "How can that be? The world is filled with living things."

"Nevertheless," replied Odin, "I am lonely. For in all the magic and splendor of creation, there is not one creature who looks like me."

Hoenir slowly nodded his great head.

"Call Lodur, our brother," said he. "It's time we created man."

Passing over the earth, the three brother gods came upon a pair of ash trees standing side by side. From these they formed man.

Odin blew upon the trees, giving to each tree a soul. Hoenir, in his turn, gave them the power to think and the will to move. Lodur added blood and human feeling.

In the ages that followed, the trees took on human shape and became the first man and woman.

Beautiful were they in the eyes of the gods.

"Truly," said Odin, "these are my children. I will watch over them and love them for as long as they dwell upon the earth."

YGGDRASIL

Before the class begins, cut at least the three roots and the bottom part of the trunk of Yggdrasil, the great ash tree, from brown butcher paper and pin it in the center of the bulletin board. The three roots shouldgo down below the bulletin board if there is room. If you feel especially ambitious you might make the entire tree, huge enough so that its branches go to the ceiling of the classroom. However, the three roots and the bottom part of the trunk are quite sufficient.

When the class begins, ask your students if they notice anything different about the bulletin board. Tell them that this is a great ash that stood in the midst of all that the Aesir had created. This ash tree had a name: Yggdrasil (ig′drə sil).

Go over the picture in the text with them, pointing out the three roots of Yggdrasil and explaining who lived at the end of each one.

1. Land of the Frost Giants - students will recall the frost giants from the creation story. Mimir (mē′mir) is a frost giant. Discuss the word wisdom.

2. Norns are the Fates who know everything about the past and present, and are able to see into the future. Your students may like describing what these hags look like.

3. Land of Niflheim (niv′əl hām) - a place of mist and ice and constant fog. Nithhog (nith′hog) is a great serpent who your students will see is doing damage to the tree.

Tell your students to listen to the story of YGGDRASIL to find out three things:

1. What horrible thing happens to Odin when he visits Mimir's well? (He loses one eye.)

2. What frightening thing does Odin learn when he visits the Norns' well? (Asgard will be destroyed by the forces of evil.)

3. How is the serpent damaging the great tree, Yggdrasil? (Gnawing at the roots)

VOCABULARY

Asgard (az′gard) - home of the gods

Ragnarok (rag′nə rok) - the day of doom for the gods and all creation

REVIEW

Odin

Aesir

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. (See above for three things students were asked to listen for.)

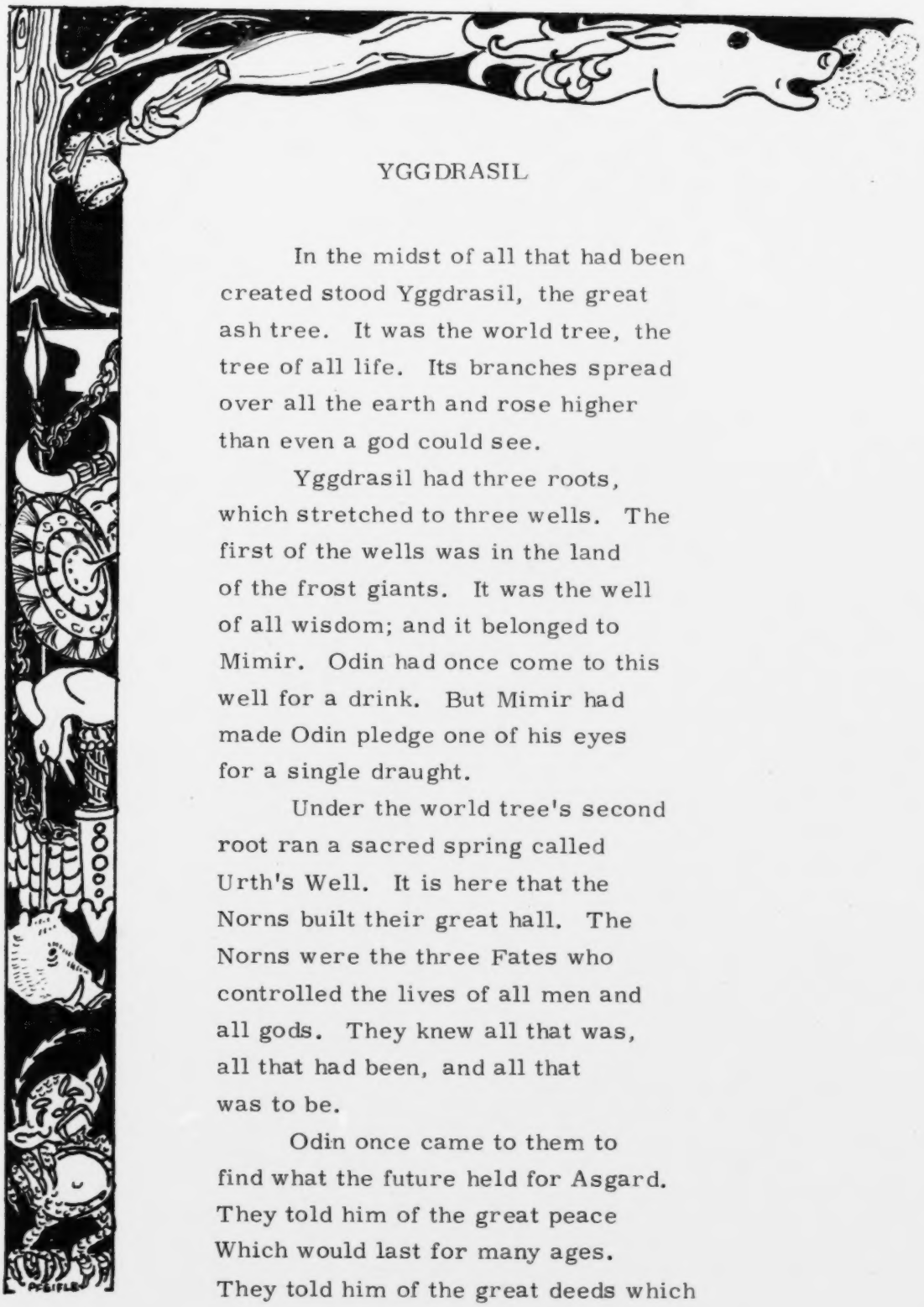
2. If you were Odin, and the Norns told you that your kingdom would be destroyed by the forces of evil, what would you do? (Open discussion)

ACTIVITIES

1. Give each student a strip of paper (1" by 10" or so) and ask them to decorate their strips to look like snake skin. (You may want to show a film or filmstrip which shows different kinds of snakes; or you may want to have your students look in reference books to find pictures of snakes in order to help them with their drawing.) When the skins are done, tape them together, add a vicious serpent head, and coil Nithhogg around the bottom of the bulletin board and his root of the tree.

2. Ask your students to pretend that they have the power of a Norn, but not the appearance. In other words, they can see into the future. Ask them to predict or tell what will happen in the future in such areas as space travel, pollution, what cars will be like, what people will eat, etc.

3. During their extra time, perhaps some students will want to make other things mentioned in the creation story and the Yggdrasil story for the bulletin board.



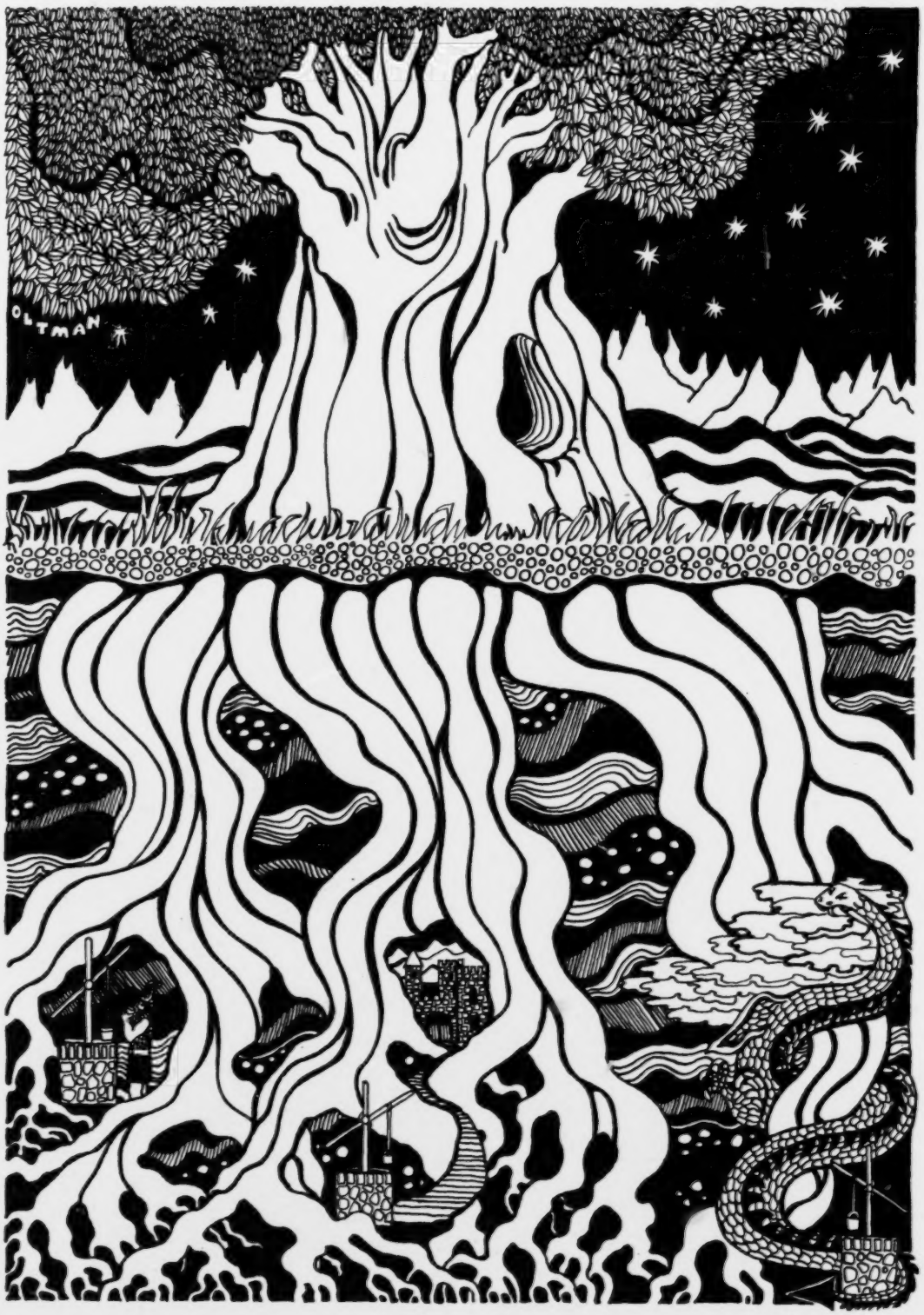
YGGDRASIL

In the midst of all that had been created stood Yggdrasil, the great ash tree. It was the world tree, the tree of all life. Its branches spread over all the earth and rose higher than even a god could see.

Yggdrasil had three roots, which stretched to three wells. The first of the wells was in the land of the frost giants. It was the well of all wisdom; and it belonged to Mimir. Odin had once come to this well for a drink. But Mimir had made Odin pledge one of his eyes for a single draught.

Under the world tree's second root ran a sacred spring called Urth's Well. It is here that the Norns built their great hall. The Norns were the three Fates who controlled the lives of all men and all gods. They knew all that was, all that had been, and all that was to be.

Odin once came to them to find what the future held for Asgard. They told him of the great peace Which would last for many ages. They told him of the great deeds which

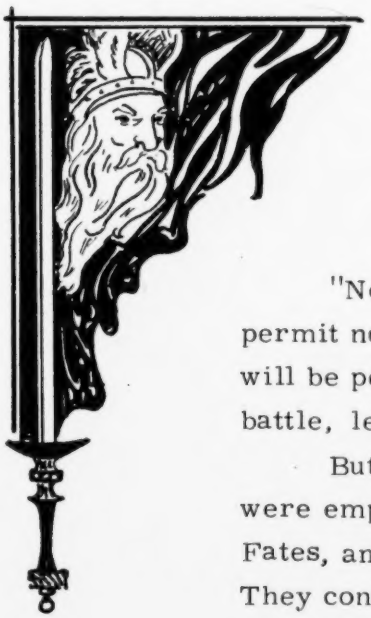

OLTMAN

would bring fame to the Aesir. They told him of the full lives which the Aesir would have. But then they told Odin of the third root of Yggdrasil.

"The third root of this great tree is in Niflheim, the world of fog," they said. "Beneath it is another well. No one may go to this well to drink, for it is guarded by a serpent. The serpent is Nithhogg, who gnaws at the roots of this tree of life and waits for Ragnarok."

Odin was very puzzled by this. He had never heard of Ragnarok. "You speak in riddles, Norns. What is this Ragnarok?" he asked.

"Ragnarok is not a 'what.' It is a "when." It is the day of doom for the Aesir. It is the day of destruction. On that day, all forces of evil will rise against Asgard and destroy it. The time of peace will end, and brother will turn against brother. The Aesir will no longer be happy and will battle and slay each other."



"Never!" cried Odin. "I will permit no god to slay another. There will be peace. If there is to be battle, let the Aesir stand together."

But Odin knew that his words were empty. The Norns were the Fates, and they controlled all life. They controlled destiny, and even the gods could not change destiny. The Norns had said that peace would be for many ages. Odin knew that he must be content with that.

A MEETING OF THE GODS

Tell your students that in today's story they will meet many of the gods and goddesses of Asgard. Discuss the term goddess, the female counterpart of a god. Go through the pictures in the text asking your students to guess the duties of each by looking at his or her dress, accessories, and the background of the picture.

1. Odin has two ravens perched on his shoulders. The two wolves at his feet are his trusted watchdogs. His spear symbolizes his power. Odin is the All-Father or King of the Gods.

2. Thor, god of rain and thunder, holds his hammer in his right hand. His hammer is also a symbol, which will be discussed in a later story. You might ask what Thor's hammer would have to do with rain and thunder.

3. Loki (lō′kē), god of fire and mischief, is handsome but he causes a lot of trouble in today's story.

4. Heimdall (hām′dăl), watchman of the gods, wears white armor and carries the trumpet Giallerhorn around his neck. This is the horn that, at the end of time, will call the gods to Ragnarok.

5. Balder, god of joy and light, is the favorite of all the gods. Tell your students they will find out why he is their favorite in today's story. His twin brother, Hoder, god of darkness, is blind.

6. Tyr (tēr) is the god of war and victory.

7. Hermod is the messenger of the gods.

8. Freya (frā′ya), goddess of love and beauty, seems to be very fond of Hermod.

9. Frigga (frĭg′ ə), goddess of the clouds and the sky, is the wife of Odin.

Tell your class to listen in order to find out why Odin calls a meeting of the gods and if Odin is satisfied at the end of the meeting.

VOCABULARY

century

strife - angry fighting

tempest - raging wind

to muss someone's hair - to mess it up (show this)

paradise - a place of great peace and beauty

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why does Odin call the meeting? (To speak to the gods about the problems of Asgard and earth)

2. Is Odin satisfied right after the meeting? (Probably not. He never spoke to the gods so nothing of his original purpose was accomplished.)

3. What weaknesss does Thor have?

4. What is Loki like? Do you admire him? Why or why not?

5. How do Odin's sons and wife help him to feel better?

ACTIVITY

Ask your students to recall different parts of the story such as Thor's disagreement with Loki, Heimdall making Loki angry, and Loki's disagreement with Tyr. Ask for volunteers to choose parts and act out the sections discussed.

In the centuries that followed the creation, the earth blossomed with life. Children were born to the first man and woman. These, in turn, had sons and daughters of their own who married and had families. So, family by family, the race of man increased and filled the earth.

It was the same in Asgard, home of the gods. As time passed, Odin, the All-Father, saw his many children grow into handsome and beautiful gods and goddesses. To each he gave a special job so that the affairs of earth and Asgard might run smoothly. Each did his job well and the All-Father was pleased.

Still, as he grew older, Odin began to worry. Thought and Memory, the two ravens that perched on his shoulders, whispered strange tales to him. For they saw many things in their daily flights over the earth. True, there were summer days and the green earth glowed with color. But there were also floods, famine, war, disease, and death.

Odin heard this and was troubled. Even in Asgard things were not as peaceful as they might be. Gods sometimes fought among themselves, filling Asgard with strife and neglecting the things of the earth.

Odin, therefore, decided to hold a feast. He invited all his children, thinking that, after they had eaten well, he would speak to them.

So the gods and goddesses came and found the All-Father on his throne in the great hall. He was dressed in gray with a cloak and hood of blue. His long, flowing beard hung almost to his lap. The two ravens were perched, as always, on his shoulders. In his right hand he held a spear, the symbol of his power. His trusted watchdogs, two great wolves, lay sprawled at his feet.

The gods stood before him and spoke as if in one voice.

"Hail to thee, All-Father Odin! We've come to learn your will and to serve you."

Odin waved them to their places at a long table that stretched out before him. When they were seated, great trays of food and wine were brought. Everyone began to eat. Spirits were high. Conversation was lively and laughter-filled.

When the eating was through, Odin rose to speak. He thumped the butt of the spear twice on the floor and the hall went absolutely still.

"Welcome, my children," said he. "How good it is to see you here, enjoying each other with the food. I am proud of you. Faithfully have you served me. Because of you, Asgard and the world have done well. Yet, I am uneasy. Things are not entirely as they should be."

Thor, god of rain and thunder, frowned. His red hair and beard seemed to flame even redder.

Odin couldn't help but notice.

"Good Thor," he said, "well have you served the farmers of the world. You have brought them rain for their crops and protected them from evil. But, alas, your temper runs away with you. You throw your hammer at the least excuse. Then, in all the thunder and lightning, the poor earth trembles. Floods and storms break out, bringing fear and danger to all men. As powerful as you are, you simply must learn to control yourself."

Loki, god of fire and mischief, began to laugh. He pointed his finger at Thor.

"Mighty Thor is being scolded," he said. "I wonder how he likes it."

In a rage, Thor reached for his hammer and would have thrown it if Odin had not stopped him. Reluctantly, he put his hammer away, though the anger in his face was terrible to look upon.

"Loki!" he roared. "Some day you'll go too far!"

Then he turned and stamped angrily from the room.

Odin spoke again.

"What Thor says is true, Loki. Handsome and clever as you are, the gods will not put up with your tricks forever. Be careful. A terrible fate is waiting unless you mend your ways."

Loki smiled.

"What have I done that everyone should be so concerned for me?" he asked. "I have a little joke now and then with friends. I bring a little laughter to help the day along. Surely, these cannot be crimes!"

Heimdall, watchman of the gods, eyed Loki sternly from across the wide table. His white armor and bright sword shone like the sun.

"You forget who you're talking to, Loki," he said. "I am called Heimdall, god of the early sun. I can see for a hundred miles by day or night. So sharp are my ears that even the grass growing thunders like a tempest in my brain. My friends call me the watchman."

Now Loki was angry.

"How dare you treat me like a fool, Heimdall! Of course I know you!"

"Then you know as well that I'm not confused by clumsy lies," replied Heimdall. "I've seen your tricks with my own eyes. I have heard them with my ears. You make fun of us. You are friendly to our enemies. You take what doesn't belong to you. You're a clever one, right enough. But your character is well known to the gods. You may entertain us for a while but you'll bring us sorrow in the end."

Thoroughly angry at being talked to in this way, Loki glanced about for something to throw. He snatched up a goblet and had just raised it overhead when a soft voice came floating through the air.

"Let there be peace among us," it said.

Everyone turned to look at Balder, god of light and joy. What contentment there was in his face! Long, soft hair fell to his shoulders, shining with a million points of light whenever he turned his head. He sat near the end of the table. His twin brother, Hoder, the blind god of darkness, sat beside him.

"Let us be at peace," Balder said again.

"Yes," said Hoder. "Be good to each other. Wrap your hurts in darkness and be kind."

Heimdall smiled and sat down. The other gods relaxed. They all loved Balder very much.

Loki, however, was not satisfied. Seeing that no one would fight with him, he, too, sat down. But he was not quiet.

Instead, he turned to Hermod, swift messenger of the gods, and spoke in a voice loud enough for all to hear.

"Hermod, take a message to Balder. Tell him that I fear for his health. For if he and that dear brother of his get any sweeter, I'm afraid they'll turn to honey."

Loki laughed loud and long at this, though no one else did. Many, in fact, were annoyed.

Tyr, god of war and victory, was seated next to Hermod. Like all the gods, he loved Balder for his kind and gentle ways. He also loved blind Hoder who, though he couldn't see, never complained.

"Loki," said Tyr, "you are a jealous and spiteful god. If you must fight with someone, fight with me."

So saying, he arose and stepped back from the table in order to have room to swing his sword.

Loki went slightly pale. He could see that Tyr meant business. His face was set. His eyes were cold. His battle sword was gripped firmly in his strong right hand.

Loki laughed.

"Relax, Tyr. I was only joking. Surely Balder knows that."

But Tyr was not to be put off. He started around the table. When he got to the end, however, Odin stopped him.

"My son," said he, "you have served Asgard with honor on many battlefields. Yet save your courage until the day when you'll need it more than now. Come. Put your sword away. Take Balder's advice and be at peace."

Tyr was thoughtful for a time. At last, he did as the All-Father asked. He put his sword away and returned to sit by Hermod.

Loki laughed again.

"Come on, Tyr," he said. "Laugh for once in your life. You're far too serious about everything. Tell him, Hermod. Tell him he's too serious."

"Tell him yourself," Hermod replied. "He's sitting right here. I'll deliver messages to the ends of the earth and then some if the good of Asgard requires it. But these short conversations across the table you'll have to handle yourself."

All the gods, Loki included, laughed at this. Good spirits returned to the feast. The gods began to enjoy themselves again.

Beautiful Freya, goddess of love and beauty, came to where Hermod sat. Teasingly, she mussed his hair.

You're a pretty clever one yourself, Hermod," she said. "You and your messenger service! If you're ever in a real hurry though, I'll lend you my falcon cloak."

Hermod knew what she meant. In her cloak of falcon feathers, she flew over earthly battlefields and carried the souls of the brave to paradise.

Half-turning, Hermod stared back at her. She was so beautiful! Her eyes were of the lightest blue, as if made from the summer sky. Her perfect face was framed in golden hair.

"How precious you are," he said. "I would die, and gladly, just to be with you."

"How you talk!" cried Freya. Then she mussed his hair a second time and went off laughing.

Suddenly, the feast was over. The guests began to leave. None of our problems have been solved, thought Odin. The feast was just a good time. He sighed.

Frigga, goddess of the clouds and sky, came to stand beside him. She was tall and wore a long, white robe with a string of house keys at the waist.

Odin put his arm around her.

"Wife," he said, "I am more worried than ever. I'm afraid that all the troubles of gods and men are just beginning."

Frigga smiled.

"It may be as you say," she said. "And if it is, we'll just make the best of it."

One by one, their sons came to say goodnight. Gentle Balder came first with Hoder leaning on his arm. Next came Hermod and, last of all, Tyr.

Odin and Frigga said goodnight and, with pride, watched the young gods leave.

"I could not ask for finer sons," said Odin. "They'll live with honor and face their troubles with courage."

Frigga laid her head on his shoulder.

"Yes," she said. "Remember that when you worry again. Now come to bed and rest."

Together they crossed the great hall and turned the corner to their rooms.

Odin chuckled.

"You make everything sound so easy," he said. "Perhaps that's what wives are for."

THE FENRIS WOLF

Look through the pictures in the previous story, reviewing the gods and goddesses. Tell your students they will meet Odin, Tyr, Heimdall and Hermod in today's story. They will also meet a very intelligent but ugly wolf, and some other ugly creatures.

VOCABULARY

giantess - discuss god and goddess, giant and giantess

Hela (hā'la) - an ugly giantess

serpent - a snake

Fenris wolf

immense - huge, enormous

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the gods think they should get rid of Loki's children?

2. How did Odin try to get rid of the Midgard serpent? Was Odin successful? Why or why not?

3. How did sea storms first come into the world?

4. What did Odin give to Hela as her task?

5. How did Odin get the Fenris wolf to allow himself to be tied up each of the three times?

ACTIVITY

Re-read the descriptions of the Fenris wolf (p. 20, par. 2), the Midgard serpent (p. 20, par. 3), and Hela, the giantess (p. 20, par. 4). Supply your students with construction paper, scissors, and paste. Ask them to create a mask of the face of one of Loki's children. When the masks are done, pin them along either side of the bulletin board.

THE FENRIS WOLF

When Loki married a big, ugly giantess with a heart of solid ice, they had three of the most horrible children the world has ever seen.

Their first child was a huge wolf with a mouth full of razor sharp teeth. Loki was a little disappointed, of course. Still, he didn't give up. He named the wolf Fenris and hoped that his other children might be better looking. However, they were not.

The second child was a terrible serpent with a long, red tongue and fish-like scales two feet wide.

The third child was better looking though you wouldn't call her pretty. She was a giantess with sunken eyes, a hooked nose, pointed teeth, and rough blue-gray skin. Loki called her Hela, and then gave up on having children altogether.

These awful children lived with their mother in the Giant-land cave, but not for long. They grew too fast. Soon the cave would not hold them. Indeed, nothing would hold them.

The gods became worried. If Loki's children were not stopped, they would destroy the world.

At last, All-Father Odin was asked to settle the matter. After thinking what to do, he had the monsters brought to him at Asgard.

Mighty as he was, a shiver ran down his back when he first saw the gruesome three.

"See what comes of putting things off?" he said. "These devils should have been taken care of long ago!"

Taking up the serpent, he threw it into the sea. Instead of drowning, however, the beast grew larger until it ringed the earth, its tail in its mouth. Once in a while it would get angry and, lashing about in the water, stir up a hurricane. In this way, sea storms first came into the world.

Turning next to Hela, Odin was more kind.

"You are terrible to look upon," said he. "The sight of you fills all mankind with pain and fear. Yet, you may be useful. I'll make you Queen of the Land of the Dead. There you may greet the souls of the old and the sick and show them to their resting place."

When Hela had been taken away, Odin turned to the Fenris Wolf. Right away he knew there would be trouble. For the wolf was intelligent. Besides its great size and frightful teeth, it had Loki's wit.

"You're very clever," said the wolf. "You've rid yourselves of Hela and my brother, the Midgard Serpent. But you haven't rid yourselves of me. As long as I've got these teeth, you never will. But enough idle chitchat, I'm hungry. I suggest that you

feed me. Or would you rather that I ate one of you?"

Hearing this, the gods shrank back. Even they were afraid to get near enough to the wolf to feed it.

The wolf became impatient and moved closer to the crowd. Finally, with the wolf about to spring, brave Tyr, god of war and victory, stood forth.

"I'll feed the wolf!" he cried.

"You!" exclaimed Odin. "My own son? Surely someone else will do it."

"There's no time, father," said Tyr. "Now bring the meat and quickly. We've waited too long already."

Great loads of fresh meat were brought at once. Tyr began to feed the wolf. Day and night the huge beast ate on, growing larger and more ugly while Odin and the gods pondered their next move.

Some thought it best to kill the wolf though none had the courage to try.

"Besides," said one of the smaller gods, "killing is forbidden in Asgard."

"That's true," replied Odin. "There's nothing we can do but chain the wolf. He won't do any harm if he can't move."

So thinking, they made a great iron chain. It was so heavy that twenty powerful gods were needed to lift it.

Going to the wolf, Odin smiled pleasantly and spoke.

"Good morning, Fenris," he said. "Since we're feeding you so well, I was wondering if you'd do a little favor for me."

The wolf stopped eating.

"I don't usually do favors," he said. "And I expect this one to be a trick. But tell me what you want."

Odin coughed and fiddled with his beard.

"I've been telling my friends how powerful you are. I've said that you could easily snap a heavy chain. They disagree.

They think you are large but weak."

"Weak!" roared the wolf. "Bring the chain! We'll see who's weak around here!"

The heavy chain was brought and fastened to the neck of the Fenris Wolf. His great paws were also bound.

The gods winked at each other. Some smiled. The wolf shook himself and the chain came raining down in pieces.

"Keep that meat coming!" cried the wolf to Tyr. "Can't you see I'm hungry?"

Greatly amazed, the gods stole quietly away. Odin managed to thank the wolf. Then he joined his friends in the blacksmith shop where they made a chain twice as big.

Returning to the wolf, Odin tried again.

"What pride you must feel to have such strength," he said. "The gods are still talking about how easily you snapped the chain. Some think you could break one twice as big."

"Of course I could," replied the wolf, throwing out his chest. "Too bad there's not one handy."

"Oh," said Odin, "we always keep a few of the heavier chains around."

He waved his arm and forty of the strongest gods in Asgard, straining every muscle, brought the new chain out.

The wolf blinked a couple of times when he saw what he was up against. The chain was bigger than he had imagined. Still he thought he could handle it. He had grown twice as large on his fresh meat diet and the exercise would do him good. So he let himself be chained again.

Laboring mightily for an hour or two, the gods at last had the chain in place. Standing way back, they looked hopefully on as the wolf began to shake himself.

Great chain links flew everywhere, falling like iron boulders.

The gods ran for cover. Odin dodged here and there, trying to look pleased at what the wolf had done. The wolf growled and gnashed his fearsome teeth. Tyr went quickly back to serving meat.

When the chain pieces had at last stopped falling, the gods met at Odin's palace to work their brains again. It was a rather gloomy meeting. No one had any fresh ideas. Hope was fading rapidly.

"One thing's for sure," said Heimdall, watchman of the gods. "If that wolf gets much bigger, we'll not be able to control him at all."

"There's one thing we haven't tried yet," said Odin. "The mountain spirits. If anyone can make a chain that will hold Fenris, it will be them."

Thereupon, he called a messenger and sent him off at full speed to ask the spirits for a chain that could not be broken. Then he and the gods, feeling somewhat hopeful, sat down and waited.

When the messenger arrived, the mountain spirits greeted him warmly. Hearing what he wanted, they went at once to their workshop in the heart of a great mountain. There the chief spirit took the beard of a woman from a brownstone jar and dropped it into a huge iron pot. To this he added the roots of a stone, the breath of a fish, and the strength of a bear. From a cool cellar, he took the sound of a cat's footstep and four bird's teeth. These he added to the pot, took up a long, golden paddle, and slowly began to stir.

When the mixture thickened, he rounded it up into a ball with his hands. At a silver spinning wheel nearby, he spun the ball into thread. Other spirits then wove the thread into thin, airy rope called Gleipner.

The chief spirit gave the rope to the messenger. It was lighter than a butterfly's kiss and softer than moonshine in a young fawn's eye.

The messenger raced home to Odin with the wonderful rope. Odin raced out to the wolf who, by this time, had grown to an immense size.

Odin began to laugh.

The wolf eyed him suspiciously.

"Wha are you laughing about?" he asked.

"I was thinking," said Odin. "You snap our heaviest chain with ease while I can't even break this thin, soft twine."

He laughed again. Then he pulled and grunted and got red in the face but the twine did not break. A few of the younger gods came and tried their luck but no one could break the twine.

"No doubt about it," said Odin. "This twine is stronger than it looks."

"Perhaps it's enchanted," said the wolf.

"Enchanted?" said Odin. "I hadn't thought of that! Why don't you see if you can break it? It would have to be enchanted to hold such strength as yours."

"No," said Fenris. "If I couldn't break it, you'd never let me go."

"What a thing to say!" cried Odin. "Of course we'd let you go. Still, if you're afraid. . ."

"Who's afraid!" roared the wolf. "Go ahead! Bind me if you will. But first, there is one thing."

"Yes?" said Odin.

"Tyr must put his hand inside my mouth while I'm being bound. If this is a trick, I must be sure that you'll let me go."

Odin was horrified. Yet, before he could speak, brave Tyr held up his left hand.

But the wolf shook his head.

"No, Tyr. It must be the right hand. The sword hand. The one you value most."

Without a word, Tyr did as the wolf commanded. The awful teeth closed firmly around his right hand.

"Bind him !" cried Tyr.

The magic rope was quickly placed about the neck and paws of Fenris and tied down deep within the earth.

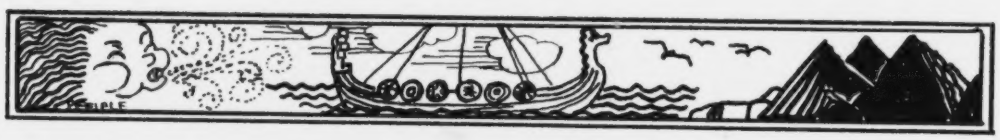
At once the wolf began to pull. He lunged his great body first one way then the other. Blood-chilling cries poured from his throat. But the more he pulled, the tighter the rope became. At last, he couldn't move.

The gods began to laugh and shout with joy. Tyr, however, was not among them. For in his rage at being tricked, the wolf brought together his awful teeth and snipped off Tyr's hand at the wrist.

"What a great price to pay for safety!" cried Odin.

"A warrior does what he must to protect his home," said Tyr. "I am proud to have had the courage."

Asgard, too, was proud. When Tyr's wound had healed, they held a great feast in his honor. Wherever he went, he was met with respect and admiration. For the gods well knew that, because of what Tyr had done, they were safe from the Fenris Wolf until Ragnarok, where all things end.



THOR'S JOURNEY: Part 1

(From the beginning through How Thor and Loki Gained a Companion.)

Ask your students what bad news of the future Odin learned in an earlier story. Explain that even though the Norse gods and the Norse men knew that one day the forces of evil would overpower and destroy them, still both gods and men fought against these evils. Tell them that the next story is about the great thunder god named Thor who goes on a journey to fight against the king of the giants, Utgard-Loki.

VOCABULARY

Asgard - home of the gods

Odin - king of the gods

Brock - a dwarf who lives in Asgard

Loki - a mischievous god

Utgard-Loki - the Giant King

Roskva (rosk′va) - the daughter

Thyalfi (thy al′fe) - the son

Explain that today they will only hear the first part of the story of Thor's journey to Giant Land in which Thor and Loki set off, then stop to spend the night with a family.

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. When do you think the family realized that their two visitors were gods? Explain. (There may be a variety of answers.)

2. If you were Thyalfi and Thor had invited you to go along with him to Giant Land, what would you take with you? Remember, you will be walking.

ACTIVITIES

1. Suggest that your students use colored pencils to begin a map of Thor's journey. When students are finished, pin their pictures around the bulletin board if there is room.

2. Re-read this sentence aloud to the students: "But Loki had opened his mouth once too often, and Brock, the dwarf, had sewed it shut with a magic needle."

Ask students to imagine how this happened and write a description of the incident.

How do they think Brock was able to do the sewing?
Did he trick clever Loki into falling asleep?
How else could he have done it?

THOR'S JOURNEY: Part 2

(Begin at A Meeting With a Giant and end at the conclusion of A Sound Sleeper.)

Ask your students to look at the maps they began in part one of the story. Ask them to recall where Thor is going and why. Ask them who else is with Thor. Then ask what impressed Thor about Thyalfi.

Tell your students that in today's episode Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi meet a strange and rather mysterious character named Skrymer (skrē'mir), sleeping on the ground.

Suggest that your students listen especially carefully to the story and select a part that they would like to act out and the character they would like to be.

VOCABULARY

oval - Ask students to make an oval shape with their hands in the air.

strides - Ask a volunteer who knows the meaning of the word to take strides around the room.

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

Instead of your asking the students questions, ask them to ask their own questions about the mysterious things in this section of the story. For example, why couldn't Thor untie the knot? How could all of Thor's blows barely affect Skrymer? As the students ask their questions, write them on a piece of butcher paper, let other students speculate on the answers, and tell them that in a later part of the story all of the mysteries will be cleared up.

ACTIVITY

Ask your students what portions of the story they would like to act out. List the episodes they suggest. Then ask what characters would be needed for each episode and list them. Ask for volu nteers to play each character and act out the episodes as they occur in the story. You may want to have different casts act out a favorite episode if a number of children volunteer for the same parts.

THOR'S JOURNEY: Part 3

(Beginning with An Eating Race and a Running Race through Three Defeats for Thor and ending with ". . . they were soon fast asleep.")

Ask your students to summarize the story of Thor's journey so far. Ask them why Thor was on his way to Giant Land. Ask them what had made Thor angry the night before. Then ask why Thor had been so discouraged just before he had gone to sleep that night.

Tell your students that in this part of the story Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi arrive in Giant Land. Ask your students what they would try to do if they arrived at the hall of the giants and were told that they would have to do something better than anyone else in the hall in order to be able to stay there. Tell them that while they have great strength and some magical powers, the giants are much bigger and also have magical powers. What would your students do, then, if they had to do something better than anyone else? (Discussion)

After they have run out of ideas, look at the pictures in the story and tell them that Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi offered to do what is in the picture. Ask students to guess what each offered to do and predict how well each succeeded. Have the following names on the board and suggest that as you read the story, your students might want to put the names of each of the characters beside the appropriate picture: LOKI, LOGI, THOR, DRINKING HORN, ELLI, HUGI.

VOCABULARY

Utgard-Loki - king of Giant Land (notice the similarity with Loki)

to "hold your own" - to compete successfully against someone or in a contest

a puny sapling - a small and weak young tree

draught (draft) - a long drink

REVIEW

Skrymir

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. How do you think Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi felt when they tried as hard as they could and couldn't succeed? (Discuss) When is it more disappointing not to succeed: when you have tried your hardest, or when you haven't tried very hard at all? (Discuss)

2. Thor and his friends have been tricked by the giants. How do you think the giants tricked them? (Discuss.) Tell your students they will find out the answers to all the mysteries in the next part of the story, which is also the last part.

ACTIVITY

Have your students try their hand at illustrating one of the events in the story. Hang up a few of them for review purposes for the next part of the story.

THOR'S JOURNEY: Part 4

(Beginning with "In the morning, Utgard-Loki himself showed them to the castle door" through the end.)

Looking at the pictures from Part 2 of the story, ask for volunteers to recount what Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi tried to do and the outcomes. Then ask for volunteers to act out each of the characters' attempts.

Ask again if anyone has an idea about how the giants tricked the characters. Look over the questions from Part 2 which were written on butcher paper. Tell your students that the final story will unravel all the mysteries.

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Skrymir really? (Utgard-Loki)

2. Why hadn't Thor's hammer blows hurt Skrymir (Utgard-Loki)? (Invisible mountain was protection.)

3. What had Thor's hammer blows done? (Made three valleys)

4. What was Loki really trying to out-eat? (Fire. Discuss how fire eats things.)

5. What was Thyalfi racing? (A thought. Discuss how long it takes someone to have a thought about something.)

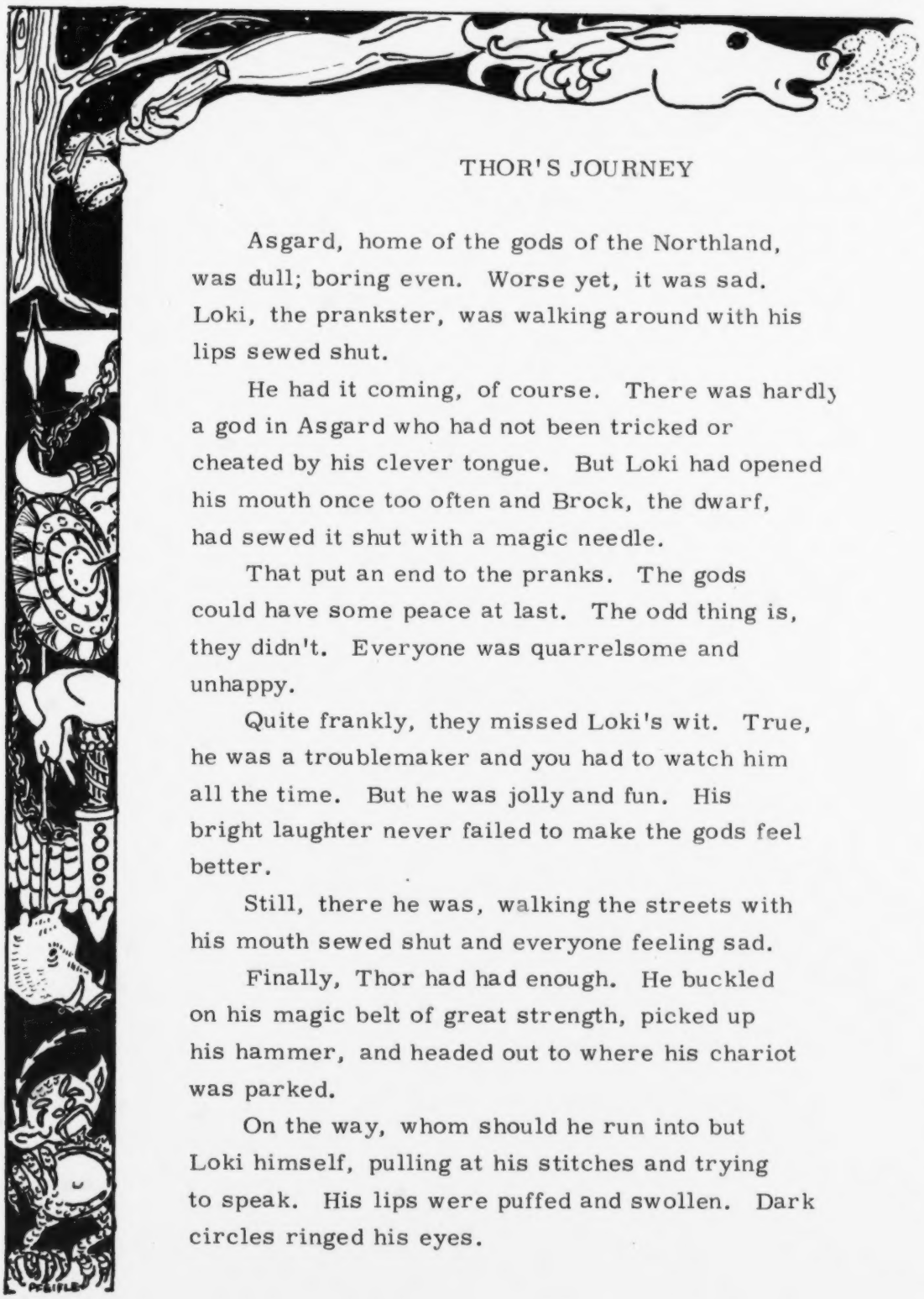
6. What was in the drinking horn? (The sea)

7. What was the cat? (A serpent)

8. What was Elli the nurse? (Old age. Discuss other stories the students may know that tell about characters who try not to grow old, or who find magical ways to stay young.)

ACTIVITY

Thor was very angry at the giants for playing tricks on him and his friends. Suppose Thor later decides to go back to Giant Land and fight the giants, especially Utgard-Loki. Write a class adventure about what happens when Thor goes back. Remember that both Thor and Utgard-Loki can change themselves into other things.



THOR'S JOURNEY

Asgard, home of the gods of the Northland, was dull; boring even. Worse yet, it was sad. Loki, the prankster, was walking around with his lips sewed shut.

He had it coming, of course. There was hardly a god in Asgard who had not been tricked or cheated by his clever tongue. But Loki had opened his mouth once too often and Brock, the dwarf, had sewed it shut with a magic needle.

That put an end to the pranks. The gods could have some peace at last. The odd thing is, they didn't. Everyone was quarrelsome and unhappy.

Quite frankly, they missed Loki's wit. True, he was a troublemaker and you had to watch him all the time. But he was jolly and fun. His bright laughter never failed to make the gods feel better.

Still, there he was, walking the streets with his mouth sewed shut and everyone feeling sad.

Finally, Thor had had enough. He buckled on his magic belt of great strength, picked up his hammer, and headed out to where his chariot was parked.

On the way, whom should he run into but Loki himself, pulling at his stitches and trying to speak. His lips were puffed and swollen. Dark circles ringed his eyes.

Thor was filled with pity.

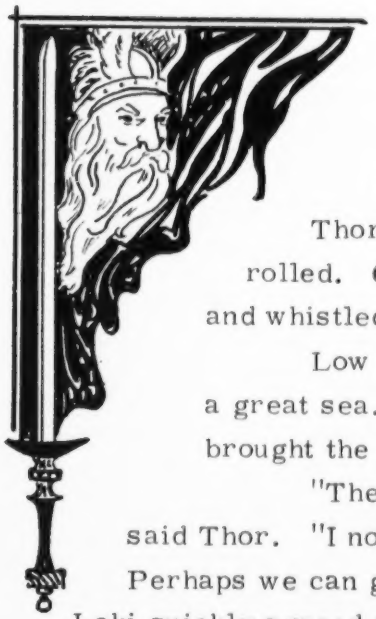
"Loki," he said. "I'm off to Jotunheim to fight the Giant-king. I'll let you come along if you promise to behave yourself."

This pleased Loki. He tried to smile.

"Will you be good?" asked Thor.

Loki nodded. Instantly his stitches fell away. With great happiness, he followed Thor to the chariot and got in.

Thor raised his hammer. Deafening thunder rolled across the sky. Lightning sizzled and cracked. All the gods of Asgard fell silent and watched Thor's chariot, drawn by two great goats, arc out through space and disappear.



How Thor and Loki Gained a Companion

On flew the chariot. Again and again Thor raised his hammer and the thunder rolled. Cold winds tore at his and Loki's clothing and whistled in the horns of the huge goats.

Low over the earth they flew to the shore of a great sea. There, in a wooded meadow, Thor brought the chariot to a stop. It was late evening.

"There's a cottage up near the beach," said Thor. "I noticed the firelight as we came in. Perhaps we can get something to eat there."

Loki quickly agreed to this. The swelling in his lips had gone down. He was hungry.

They made themselves smaller, so that they were the size of men. Then they drove across the meadow and up to the cottage door. Thor knocked. A man opened and, peering into the fading light, asked them to come in.

"We are travelers," said Thor. "We have come a long way and are hungry. We thought, perhaps, you might have some food."

The man looked at his wife, who was just setting a bowl of thin soup on the table. He looked also into the two young faces seated there--Thyalfi, his son, and Roskva, his daughter. How pale they all were!

At last, his eyes came again to Thor.

"Please sit down," he said. "We are poor and have very little. Yet you are welcome to what we have."

Thor and Loki took their places. The wife brought them each a homemade wooden bowl and passed the soup around.

"What!" cried Thor. "No meat?"

The farmer shrugged.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It's been a very hard winter. We ate the animals long ago."

"A man must have meat," said Thor.

He got up from the table and, taking a knife, went outside to where the chariot stood. Quickly, he killed the goats and skinned them. The meat he took inside where the wife cooked it gladly.

Spreading the skins on the floor, he said, "Eat your fill. But throw your bones on the skins when you're through. And be very careful that none are broken."

Everyone ate as though they had never eaten before. One by one the bones came clean and were tossed upon the skins. All were strong and sound--all but one.

Thyalfi, in his hunger, tore at the meat so savagely that he snapped a small bone with his teeth. He remembered what Thor had said and his spirits dropped.

But the conversation was so jolly and the food so good that surely one tiny bone wouldn't matter. So he threw this bone in with the others and said nothing.

At daybreak the next morning, Thor went to where the bones were and touched each pile with his hammer. Instantly the goats sprang to life again, as strong and whole as before--except that one had a slight limp.

White with rage, Thor waved his hammer in the air until the thunder nearly shook the house apart.

"Who has dared to disobey me?" he roared. "Death will be his reward!"

The farmer and his family were beside themselves with fear. They dropped to their knees and begged for mercy.

"Please, sir," said the wife. "We are only simple folk. Spare us!"

But Thor was too angry. He gripped the hammer with such force that his knuckles turned white. His face was terrible to look upon.

Gathering all his courage, Thyalfi stepped forward.

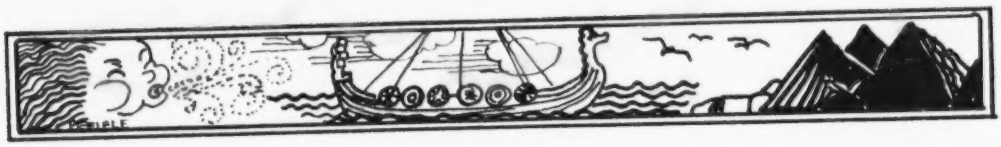
"It's me you want," he said. "Last night in my eagerness for meat, I accidentally broke one of the bones. If this should cause you to kill me, go ahead. Only please don't harm my family."

Thor was touched by the lad's courage. His anger suddenly left him. He put his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"I'll not be killing you, lad, or anyone else. Because of you, I will spare this house. Still, Loki and I will need your help. We are going far and there is much to do. Come along."

Greatly excited, Thyalfi said goodbye to his family and followed the travelers outside.

"We'll leave the goats with your father," said Thor. "The leg may be mended by the time we get back."



A Meeting with a Giant

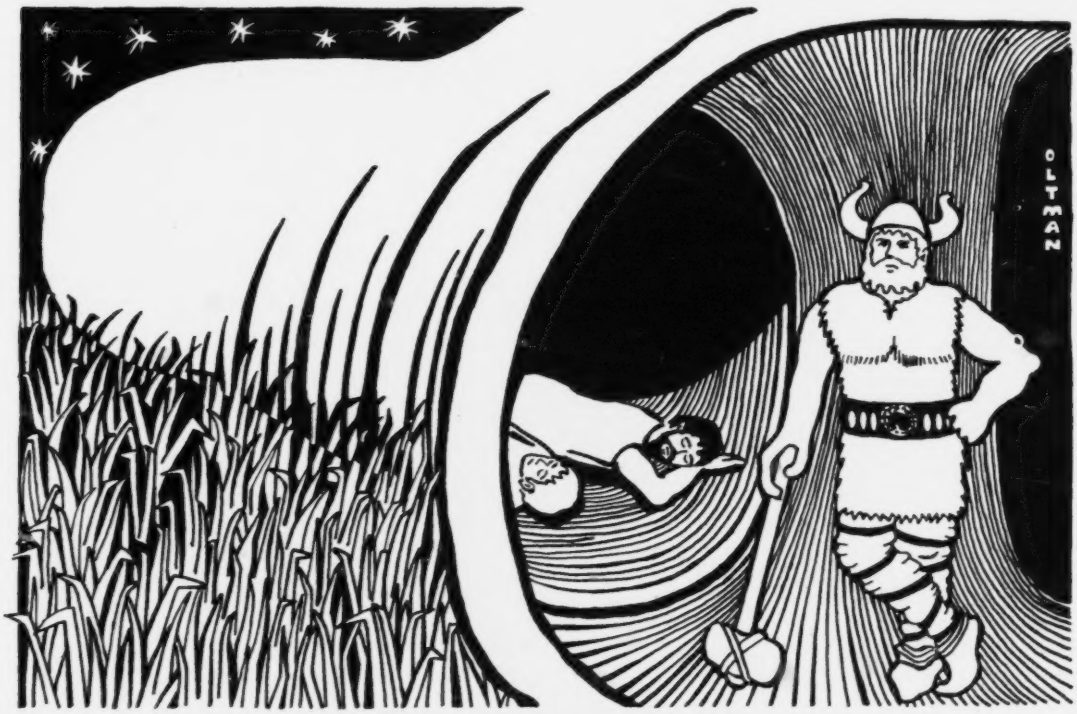
Thor and Loki changed themselves back to their full size. Then Thor led the way to the sea and waded across to the other shore. Loki followed after him, carrying young Thyalfi on his shoulders.

On the other side, they entered a dark forest and walked for many miles. Thyalfi, who could run faster than any other man, carried the food in a large leather bag. He whistled and sang as he skipped along.

Just at nightfall, they came to a clearing in the trees. Loki, in searching for a place to sleep, came upon a very odd building indeed. It was oval-shaped in front with a huge doorway that took up one whole side.

The building was empty. There wasn't a stick of furniture anywhere and no fireplace. Nevertheless, as soon as they had eaten, the three travelers curled up on the floor and went to sleep.

Near midnight, they were shaken from their slumbers by a tremendous noise. Thyalfi and Loki jumped up and ran to the back of the building. There they found a large tunnel and crawled into it. Presently the noise died down and they went to sleep again.



Thor, of course, did not sleep. He drew his hammer and stood in the doorway, ready for whatever the night might bring along. Aside from the noise, however, nothing happened.

Morning came and Thyalfi spread a light breakfast on a grassy hillside nearby. While he and Loki sat down to eat, Thor explored the clearing.

He hadn't gone far when what should he find sleeping in the bachelor's-buttons but a huge giant. The giant stirred when Thor came near him and sat up. So great and powerful was he that, for the first time in his life, Thor hesitated to strike a blow. Instead, he asked the giant's name.

"I am Skrymir," replied the giant. "And you are Thor of Asgard. Your fame is well known to me. But where did I put my glove?"

Looking here and there among the grass and weeds, he at last saw the lost glove and stooped to pick it up. Thor at once recognized the glove as the strange building in which he had spent the night. The tunnel into which Loki and Thyalfi had crawled was the opening into the thumb.

From an immense sack, the giant took some bread and cheese for his breakfast.

"Well, Thor," he said, "where are you going?"

Thor explained that he and his friends were off to Giantland.

Skrymir nodded.

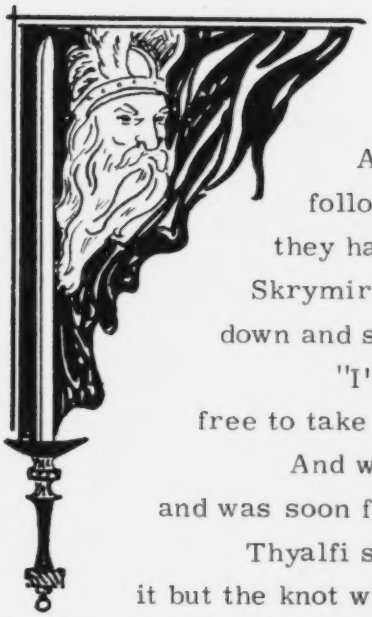
"I am headed in that direction myself," he said. "Perhaps we can travel together."

Thor discussed this with Loki and Thyalfi and they decided to walk along with Skrymir. He seemed pleasant enough. In fact, just as they were leaving, he offered to carry Thyalfi's food bag inside his own.

"The little it weighs is no burden for me," said Skrymir. "And you'll travel easier without it."

"Thank you," said Thyalfi. "That's very nice of you."

He handed up the bag. Skrymir dropped it into his own bag, tied down the top and started off.



A Sound Sleeper

All day long, Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi followed the giant whose strides were so long they had to run to keep up. When night came, Skrymir stopped to rest. He put the great sack down and stretched out full length upon the ground.

"I'm going to sleep," said he. "Feel free to take your supper from the bag."

And with that, he rolled over on one side and was soon fast asleep.

Thyalfi scrambled up on the bag and tried to untie it but the knot was much too tight. He called Loki to give him a hand. Together they pulled and tugged at the heavy leather rope but without success.

"Thor's the one to handle this," said Loki. "His strength is more than a match for any knot."

So Thor climbed onto the sack and gripped the rope in his mighty hands. He set his jaw, spread his feet wide and tugged at the knot until the muscles bulged under his skin. His face grew red; his temper short. He roared and cursed the knot. Still he could not untie it. With shame in his voice, he was forced to admit that, mighty as he was and wearing the magic belt of strength, he could not undo a simple knot. He and Loki and Thyalfi slid down to the ground and went to bed without their supper.

After a time, Loki and Thyalfi were able to sleep. Thor, however, was too angry and ashamed to do anything but pace back and forth in the moonlight. He was sure that the giant knew how to open the sack but would not tell him. Then, to make matters worse, the giant began to snore.

Thor had had enough. He drew his hammer and walked to where Skrymir lay.

"A blow on the head will improve his manners," he thought.

Raising the hammer over his head, he came down with such a thunderous blow that the trunks of huge oaks were split with the sound of it.

But the giant barely stirred.

"My, my," said he, "something tickled my forehead. Perhaps a hummingbird dropped a feather on me."

Then he smacked his lips and cleared his throat and went back to sleep again.

Thor couldn't believe his ears. Again he raised his hammer and brought it down with such force that songbirds were blown from their perches half a world away.

As before, Skrymir hardly moved.

"Some late-flying moth must have brushed me with its wing," was all he said.

Now Thor was really angry. He filled the night with thunderbolts and the hottest kind of lightning. So great was his anger that the sea rolled back three hundred feet. Entire schools of fish raced to the surface to see what was the matter. Loki and Thyalfi came running.

With his famous white-knuckle grip, Thor raised the hammer high and brought it crashing down with both hands. The very earth shook and trembled. The hammer sank so far out of sight in Skrymir's head that if Thor had not gripped it firmly he surely would have lost it.

But Skrymir only sat up and scratched his head.

"Is there a horsefly around tonight?" he asked. "I seem to hear a faint buzzing."

Then he yawned and stretched and went back to sleep again.

Feeling very weak and defeated, Thor flung himself down under a spreading elm and went to sleep himself. Very quietly, Loki and Thyalfi did likewise.

Skrymir was up at the crack of dawn. Going to where Thor lay, he shook him awake.

"If you expect to reach Jotunheim by nightfall, you'd best be on your way," he said. "Just bear to the east and keep going. You can't miss it. As for me, I'll say goodbye. My way lies north to those mountains beyond."

Hoisting the great sack to his shoulder, he bent way down and looked Thor in the face.

"It might be best for you to forget about Giantland and return to Asgard," he said. "Utgard-Loki, the Giant King, is not fond of creatures so small as you. He and his men are sure to give you a hard time."

"No," replied Thor. "There's no turning back. It's on to Giantland for us, come what may."

Skrymir sighed.

"Have it your way," he said. "Only learn to curb your tongue. If you do not brag about the things you can do, Utgard-Loki may treat you kindly."

And without speaking further, he turned and strode away.

Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi stood watching him go and were so glad to be rid of him that they didn't mention the food.

An Eating Race and A Running Race

Going east, the three companions traveled most of the day. In late afternoon, they passed through a gap in the mountains onto a great plain. There, rising before them, was a castle with walls so high they couldn't see the top.

They went to the gate and found it locked tight. Even Thor couldn't budge it. Looking around, however, they found a place where they could crawl in through the bars.

Once inside the castle, they passed through a doorway and found themselves in a great hall. Utgard-Loki, the Giant King, sat at one end on a high throne while his fellow giants lined the room on either side.

"Well!" cried Utgard-Loki. "Can this be the famous Thor of Asgard?"

"Indeed it is!" replied Thor. "My friends and I salute you."

But the Giant King only laughed through his teeth.

"This puny sapling is Thor of Asgard? I find that hard to believe. But come. Show us what you can do. We never let anyone stay here who isn't better at some thing than all other men."

Loki, who was very hungry, stepped forward and said, "I'll wager that I can eat faster than anyone here."

"Excellent!" roared Utgard-Loki. "You are a man of spirit and spirit is welcome here."

He sent for a man called Logi and sat him down opposite Loki in the center of the floor. A great long wooden dish full of beef was placed between them. At a signal, they both began to eat.

Loki, starting at one end, quickly ate his way to the center of the dish, devouring all the meat on the way. Unfortunately, Logi reached the center at the same time. And Logi had eaten not only the meat but the bones and the dish as well. He, therefore, was judged the winner.

"So much for your eating speed," said Utgard-Loki, scornfully. "But perhaps you are faster on your feet. Come now, which of you is the runner?"

With a wide grin, Thyalfi sprang forward and offered to run against the fastest man in the giant kingdom. For Thyalfi was proud of his running. He had learned to run by chasing the swift forest animals. No man yet born could match his speed.

Utgard-Loki was delighted, of course. Leading everyone outside he had two lines drawn on the ground about three miles apart. Thyalfi stood at the starting line and was soon joined by a thin, long-legged giant called Hugi. Hugi was the fastest runner in Giantland.

When everything was ready, Utgard-Loki dropped his hand and the race was on.

Thyalfi was off like an arrow, his feet flying over the earth with such speed that they seemed not to touch at all. Straining every muscle and nerve, he managed to run even faster. For Thyalfi was determined to win.

As luck would have it, however, so was Hugi. He was every bit as fast as Thyalfi, so that for a long time they ran neck and neck.

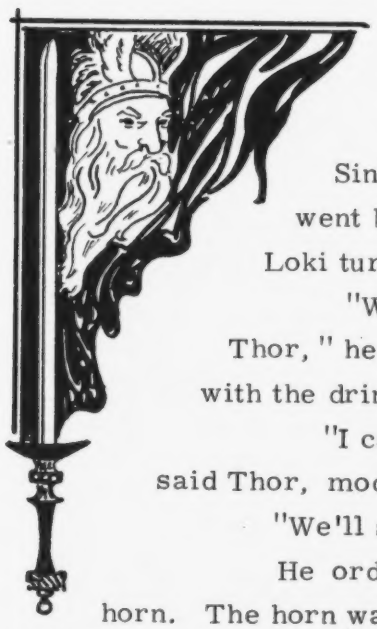
Then, just as they had passed the two mile mark, Thyalfi began to tire. Hugi pulled away. With dismay, Thyalfi watched the gap between them grow.

Suddenly it was all over. Thyalfi ran on in though his legs felt like rubber.

Utgard-Loki congratualted Hugi on his fine run and then turned to Thyalfi.

"A noble effort, my boy," he said. "You have a great heart. Perhaps you'd care to try a second time?"

Gamely, Thyalfi returned to the starting line and tried again. Yet, so thoroughly had he spent himself on the first run that Hugi beat him by two miles. Thyalfi finished the course and threw himself down on the grass, completely worn out.



Three Defeats for Thor

Since the race was over, everyone went back to the great hall where Utgard-Loki turned to Thor.

"We have heard of your great deeds, Thor," he said. "They say you're quite a man with the drinking horn."

"I can hold my own against any man here," said Thor, modestly.

"We'll see," said the Giant King.

He ordered a servant boy to bring the drinking horn. The horn was brought, brimming with drink, and presented to Thor.

"This is our drinking horn," said Utgard-Loki. "A really strong drinker can empty it in one draught. Some of our lesser drinkers take two. However, there is no one in all Jotunheim who cannot easily drain it in three."

"One draught it is then," said Thor.

He put the horn to his lips and took the biggest drink he had

ever taken. Thousands and thousands of gallons poured over the rim and into his mouth. For Thor was very thirsty.

Still, drink as he would, the horn kept pouring until he was forced to put it down and breathe. To his surprise, he found that it was nearly as full as before.

Quickly, he put the horn to his mouth a second time. Again he drank until he could drink no more. But the liquid in the horn was scarcely down from the rim.

Filled nigh to bursting, Thor lifted the horn a third time, determined to drink it dry. He gulped and swallowed until his head began to spin. Still the drink kept coming. At last, he returned the horn to the servant boy and was disappointed to see that he had taken very little from it.

Instantly Thor's anger flared.

"What do I care for drinking games?" cried he. "I am a warrior. Who dares try my strength?"

Utgard-Loki and his henchmen laughed and laughed at this.

"Well, I don't know," said the Giant King, wiping his eyes. "It would hardly be an honor to wrestle a man who can't even empty his drinking cup. But wait. Here is my old nurse, Elli. Maybe she'll give you a tumble or two."

Everyone laughed again, pointing their giant fingers at wee, puny Thor.

Thor was beside himself with rage. He grabbed the old nurse and brought her down hard over his knee, intending to break her back.

Elli groaned and wheezed but she didn't break. In fact, despite Thor's tremendous strength, she stood up straight. With one bony hand, she took him by the throat and shook him like an old rag doll.

Flopping this way and that, Thor at last broke free. Rushing in, he got her by the left leg and almost threw her a second time. She staggered a bit until she got her footing. Then, with her right foot, she kicked Thor so hard in the face that he slid clear across the hall.

Groggy from the blow, Thor got to his feet and was reaching for his hammer just as Utgard-Loki came up.

"There, there," said the Giant King. "Put away your hammer. Elli won fair and square."

"Something's wrong here!" cried Thor. "I know my strength. There is no god in all Asgard more powerful than I!"

"My dear Thor," said Utgard-Loki. "This is not Asgard but Jotunheim. And what you've been able to do here today has won you scant priase indeed. Still, if you must try again, we're willing to give you one last chance."

Thor squared his shoulders.

"So long as there's a chance for honor, an Asgard god will take it."

Utgard-Loki nodded.

"Very well," he said. "Someone bring the house cat."

A huge, gray cat was brought and put down in the center of the floor.

"Now this is a simple game, Thor," explained Utgard-Loki. "School boys here enjoy it. It's called 'Pick up the Cat.' You simply go over to the cat and pick it up. If all four paws clear the floor, you win. I realize, of course, that it's not much of a challenge. But what more can you expect?"

Thor went at once to the cat and put his hands under its stomach. He began lifting, and after a great effort he finally raised it to its feet. He kept on lifting. Up, up arched the back of the cat, but all four feet stayed firmly on the floor. Giving one final heave, Thor was able at least to get the right hind paw barely off the floor. He gave up, panting.

Utgard-Loki sadly shook his head.

"One paw will hardly do, Thor," he said. "But enough. Come. Bring your friends. It's time to eat and rest."

Thor, Loki, and Thyalfi, in spite of their defeats, ate a hearty meal. Then, snuggling deep in giant beds, they were soon fast asleep.

In the morning, Utgard-Loki himself showed them to the castle door.

"Did you enjoy your visit, Thor?" he asked.

"No," said Thor. "I have won no glory here. In fact, I am covered with shame that you should think me so puny."

"On the contrary," replied Utgard-Loki. "Now that you're out of the castle, I don't mind telling you that so long as I live, you will never enter it again. If I had had any idea of your real strength, you wouldn't have gotten in in the first place. You nearly killed us all!"

Thor was amazed at these words. He listened dumbfounded as the Giant King went on.

"You've been tricked, Thor, by magic. It was I whom you called Skrymir. In another form, I pretended to sleep by my glove so that you might find me. Knowing that you were in Jotunheim, I didn't want you out of my sight.

"My sack was tied with magic troll iron, not leather. Small wonder that you couldn't untie it!

"I put an invisible mountain between us when you tried to hit me with the hammer. Look there in the distance. Do you see that mountain with three great valleys, each one deeper than the one before? That's what your hammer did.

"Loki and Thyalfi were also tricked. Logi was no ordinary giant racing you down the wooden dish, Loki, but fire in the form of a giant. Not even a god can eat as much as fire.

"And Thyalfi, you I will always praise highly. You ran against Thought itself in the form of Hugi and made a very good showing. But no one can run faster than Thought."

"But the horn!" cried Thor. "And Elli and the cat. What of these?"

"That was no drinking horn but the sea itself," said Utgard-Loki. "Look at the ocean the next time you're there. The water line has dropped three feet because of you. No mere giant could do that."

Thor felt his anger rising.

"And the cat?" he said. "And Elli?"

Utgard-Loki, seeing the fire in Thor's eye, eased back a step.

"The cat was no cat but the great Midgard Serpent that lies coiled around the earth. The Serpent would have killed us all if you had been able to tear it loose."

Thor reached for his hammer.

"And Elli?" he asked.

Utgard-Loki had stepped back to the castle door.

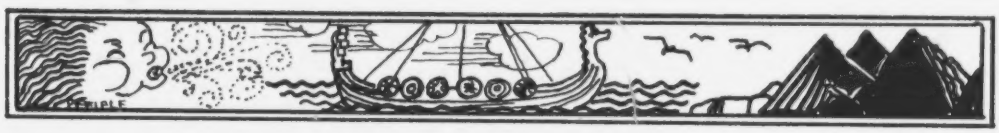
"Elli was Old Age," he said. "You took her blows with courage and strength. You may even have slowed her down, though of course you couldn't beat her.

"And now you must go. If you're wise, you won't return. For I'll use every trick I know to defend my castle against your strength."

Outraged at such trickery, Thor raised his hammer. Before he could strike, however, Utgard-Loki and his great castle were suddenly lost in a bank of fog. When the fog lifted, there was nothing to be seen but the wide plain, the mountains, and the path winding gently westward back toward Asgard, home of the gods.

Thor hung his hammer on his belt. He put one hand on Loki's shoulder and the other on Thyalfi's.

"Come on," he said. "Let's have a look at the goats."



THE THEFT OF THOR'S HAMMER

Ask your class what a pussy willow branch or flowers in a window box in a city are signs of. (Spring) Ask them what a skull and crossbones (draw one on the board) are a sign of. (Poison) Ask them what snow is a sign of. (Winter) Birds flying south. (Winter is coming.) Zeus's thunderbolts. (His power and strength.) Mercury, the messenger god's, winged helmet and sandals. (Speed) Ask students what they think Thor's hammer is a sign of by asking them what they learned about Thor in the last story. (Strength)

Tell your students that one day Thor awoke to find that his hammer, the sign of his strength, had been stolen during the night from his bedside. Ask them what they think happened to the hammer. List their ideas on the board.

Tell them to listen to the story to find out which idea, if any, is the way it happened.

VOCABULARY

Freya (frā′ya) - the beautiful daughter of Odin

Thrym (thrim) - a giant

to don some clothing - to put it on

REVIEW

Asgard

Loki

Aesir

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Which of the ideas about who stole Thor's hammer come close? (Discuss)

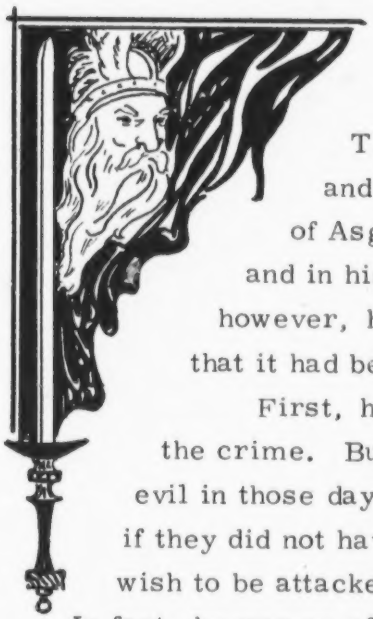
2. What part of the story do you think is the funniest? (Discuss)

3. How do you think Thrym felt when he saw who his bride really was? (Discuss)

ACTIVITIES

1. This story lends itself to acting out. If you feel really ambitious, bring a wig and a skirt and some sort of veil to class and have the students who play Thor dress up in it.

2. Suppose you were digging in the sand at the beach (or other location) one day, and found an old brass hammer. It is very, very old and decorated all over. You wonder if it might be Thor's hammer. Try to imagine how it looks and how heavy it is. What will you do with it? Will you try to keep your find a secret? Write a story about the old hammer. Tell where and how you found it, what it looks like, and how you felt when you found it. Then tell what you tried to do with it and what happened.



THE THEFT OF THOR'S HAMMER

Thor's hammer was the sign of his strength; and the giants thought it a sign of the strength of Asgard. Thor kept it by his bed at night and in his hand throughout the day. One morning, however, he awoke to find it gone, and he knew that it had been stolen.

First, he called to Loki and accused him of the crime. But Loki was not guilty, for he was not so evil in those days. Loki knew that the jotuns would attack, if they did not have to fear the hammer; and he did not wish to be attacked.

In fact, he was so afraid he said he would find the hammer for Thor. They went together to find Freya and to ask her help. Loki borrowed her cape of feathers, so that he could fly over the world on his search. Putting on the cape, he flew off like a hawk.

Soon he came to Jotunheim, the land of the giants. There he saw Thrym, the king of the giants, sitting on a small hill. Thrym smiled and greeted Loki, but Loki was suspicious, for giants never smiled.

"Greetings, yourself," said Loki. "You seem in a very good mood today. Perhaps, a little too good."

"And with good reason, too," the giant replied. "I have stolen Thor's hammer. But I will gladly give it back, if Freya will be my bride."

So Loki flew back to Asgard and explained everything to Thor and Freya. Then he asked Freya to marry the giant, but she refused, saying, "I am not so lonely that I would be a giant's wife! What would the gods think? No, you want too much of me."

Thor was very worried, but not Loki. Already his crafty mind was at work, and he soon had a plan. He told Thor to dress like Freya and to pretend to be her. At first, Thor said that he would not, because the gods would laugh at him if he dressed like a goddess. But there was no other answer.

The Aesir gathered around him. They braided his hair, covered his hairy legs in a woman's skirt, and hid his face and great beard with a bridal veil. Then they all stepped back and laughed and laughed; but Thor did not laugh.

In a rage, he shouted at them to be still. Then he climbed into the bridal carriage. Loki grabbed the reins, and off they went.

Thrym heard the bridal cart rumbling in the distance and called for his servants to prepare a feast. This was done; and when Loki and the bride arrived, they were brought to a great hall. The food was placed in front of Thor, and he ate it all very quickly.

Thrym looked at his bride-to-be and said, "Never have I seen such hunger in a woman!"

"Ah," said Loki, "she has pined for you for eight days, and has not eaten because of her love."

Then Thrym pulled the bridal veil apart to look at Freya's face; but he saw only Thor's fierce red eyes, He was surprised and said, "And never have I seen such red eyes!"

Again, Loki thought fast. "Freya has not slept for eight nights, all because of her love for you. But enough of this," Loki went on. "I have brought the bride. Now bring out the hammer, and let the wedding begin!"

"You are right, friend Loki," said Thrym. "Bring out the hammer, and let the wedding begin!"

So the hammer was taken from its hiding place and was put in Thor's lap. As soon as he felt its strength, he threw off his women's clothes and jumped up on the table. The giants were so amazed they could not speak or move. Thor swung his hammer in the air and brought it down on the table.

"So, giants, you think you can out-trick Thor!" he roared. "You must have a lesson that you will never forget!"

With that, he picked up Thrym and fifty of his servants and threw them against the wall. Then he lifted his hammer and threw that against the same wall.

The wall broke into a thousand pieces, and the great hall fell and buried the whole giant tribe.

He and Loki laughed heartily at the joke that turned on the giants. Then they jumped into the bridal carriage and rode back to Asgard.

THE DEATH OF BALDER

Ask your students what kind of character Loki is in the stories they have heard so far. Ask them to recall the things he did. Ask them if they consider him to be an evil character. Tell them that they will meet Loki again in this story, but that he has become much worse. He is an evil character in this story, as they will see.

Ask your students what they know about the burial customs of the ancient Norsemen. If no one can explain the customs, tell them that when a brave warrior died, his body was put on a ship and the ship was set on fire and pushed out to sea. Tell them that a great god dies in this story and he is put on a ship which is set on fire and sent to sea.

VOCABULARY

omens - a sign of what is to come in the future, usually a bad thing

Balder - a kind and much loved god

to plead with someone - to beg someone to do or not do something

to mourn someone - to be full of sorrow and unhappiness because a person you love has died

to avenge a death - to punish the person responsible for the death of someone

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. What thing didn't take the oath not to harm Balder? (Mistletoe bush. You might want to talk about what we use mistletoe for today and what kind of plant it is--a parasite.)

2. Why do you think the Aesir didn't follow the hag into the ice cave? (Discuss. Perhaps because the frost giants lived there. Perhaps because of the prophecy that the evil powers would conquer the gods. Perhaps because the cave was in Asgard where no fighting was allowed, etc.)

3. What do you think of the game the Aesir played with Balder? (Discuss)

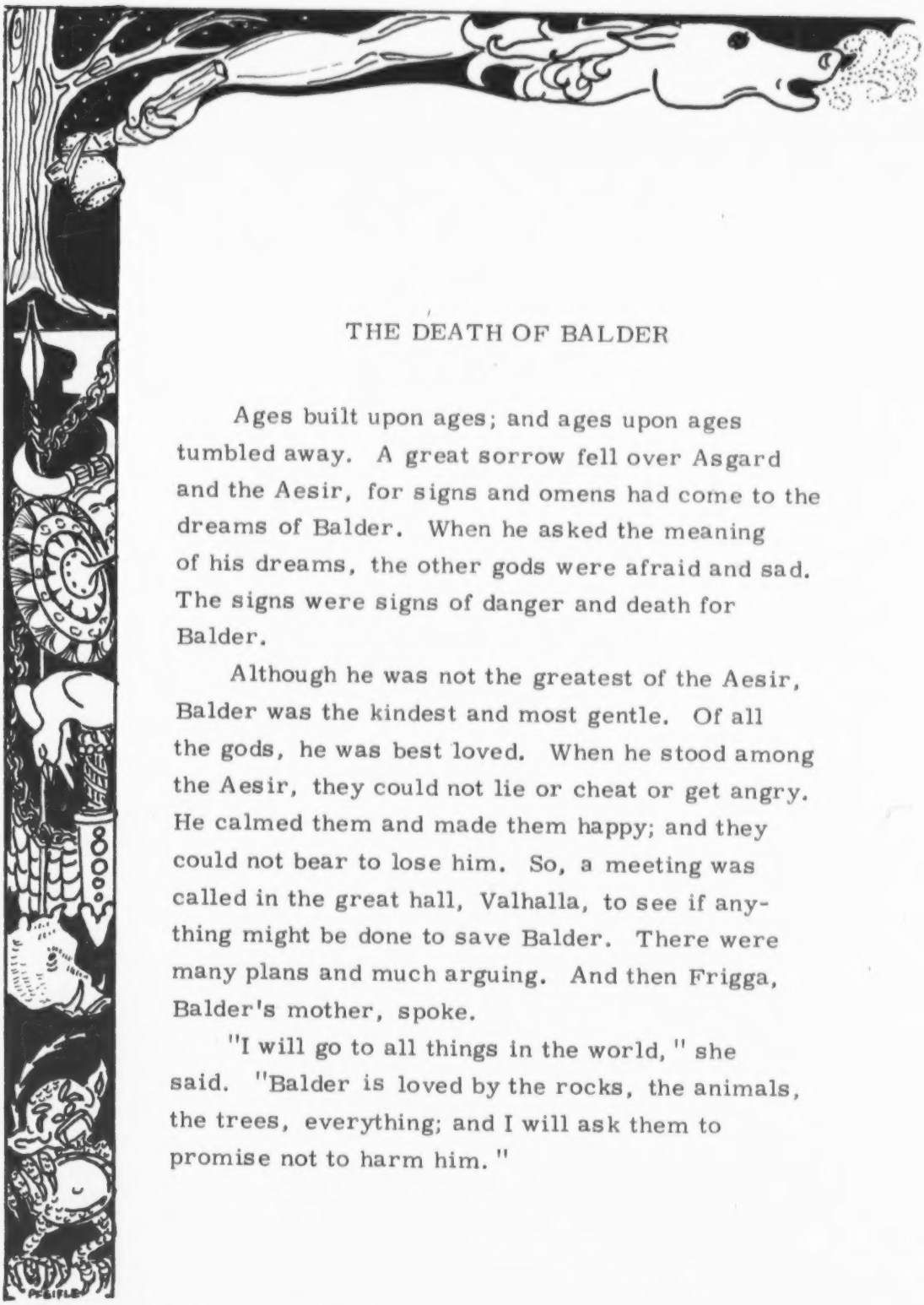
4. Why do you think Loki was jealous of Balder? (Discuss)

5. If Balder were at our school with his powers of keeping everyone honest and not angry, how do you think our school would become a better place? (Discuss)

ACTIVITIES

1. Before this lesson, make a paper chain. Tape one end to your desk or some other "high cliff" in the room. Let the other end dangle over the side and have a paper or small plastic car fastened to that end. Ask your students what parts the chain is made up of. Tell them that this is a heavy metal chain, that your desk is a dangerously high cliff, and that the chain is pulling the car up from the valley below. Ask your students how many of the links have to break before the car will fall. Break one link and let the car fall to the floor. Ask them how breaking just one link of this chain is like what happened in the story. (All but the mistletoe pledged not to harm Balder and the one thing--the mistletoe--killed him; all but the hag cried for Balder so that he would come back to life. Because the hag--the one link in the chain--did not cry, Balder couldn't return to the Aesir.)

2. Look out the window or go to a nearby field or other natural setting. Talk about what the students see. Suggest that they pretend a change comes over the place and everything becomes saddened. What would happen to the tree? (Maybe the branches would droop.) To the grass? (Die and turn brown) etc.



THE DEATH OF BALDER

Ages built upon ages; and ages upon ages tumbled away. A great sorrow fell over Asgard and the Aesir, for signs and omens had come to the dreams of Balder. When he asked the meaning of his dreams, the other gods were afraid and sad. The signs were signs of danger and death for Balder.

Although he was not the greatest of the Aesir, Balder was the kindest and most gentle. Of all the gods, he was best loved. When he stood among the Aesir, they could not lie or cheat or get angry. He calmed them and made them happy; and they could not bear to lose him. So, a meeting was called in the great hall, Valhalla, to see if anything might be done to save Balder. There were many plans and much arguing. And then Frigga, Balder's mother, spoke.

"I will go to all things in the world," she said. "Balder is loved by the rocks, the animals, the trees, everything; and I will ask them to promise not to harm him."

The Aesir agreed that this was the best plan; and it was done. To celebrate, they held a feast on a vast field of Asgard. Here, they invented a new game. They gathered in a circle, and Balder stood in the center. One by one, they would throw stones and sticks and spears at him; but Balder just stood there, smiling gently. He could not be harmed or even touched by anything that might harm him.

This was because all things had promised Frigga that they would not hurt Balder.

The gods all took great delight in this game, all except Loki, the god of fire, mischief, and evil. He alone could not stand their laughter. He was jealous of Balder and decided to end the game.

He turned himself into an old hag and went to visit Frigga, to ask why Balder could not be hurt. She didn't know the hag was Loki, so she told him of the promise of all things.

"Is there nothing that did not promise?" Loki asked.

Frigga thought for a moment. "Only the tiny mistletoe bush," she said. "It is too small and weak to be of any harm."

Loki had learned what he wanted, so he went away and turned back into his evil self. Then he went to where the small mistletoe bush grew on a great oak tree and cut it down. He carved an arrow out of the stem and carried it to the field of the feast. There he came upon Hoder, Balder's brother, who could not play the game because he was blind. Loki leaned over and whispered in Hoder's ear.

"Why don't you honor your brother?" he asked. "Why don't you join in the game?"

"I cannot," said Hoder. "I am blind and cannot even see where Balder is standing. How can I join the other gods?"

"Here, I'll help you," Loki said. "I'll be your eyes and guide your hand."

So Loki placed a bow in Hoder's hands and the special arrow on the bow. Then he aimed toward Balder for Hoder; and the arrow was let loose. It struck Balder in the heart, and he fell dead.

The Aesir could not speak or move, for they were struck with grief. One by one, they cried out and wept for Balder. They knew that Loki had done the evil deed, but they could not avenge Balder's death. Asgard was the ground of the gods; and they had promised to keep peace there. All they could do was weep bitter tears for the loss of Balder.

Odin was the first to speak. "We will build a great funeral ship for Balder and will send him to Hela, the Queen of the Dead, with glory. But all is not lost. I will send a rider to Hela to beg for Balder's life." Odin turned to his brother. "Hermod," he said. "Take my horse and go."

The gods placed Balder's body on the great ship and filled it with fire. As it burned, Hermod rode like the wind to the world of the dead. There he met Hela, who ruled that world, and he begged her to return Balder. He told her that all in Asgard loved Balder and pleaded that the gentle god be set free.

"If he is so loved," she said in a ghostly voice, "let tears be shed for him. If all things weep for him, he will return to you. But if one refuses to mourn for him, he will remain here with me."

Hermod then rode back through the dark gates of Hela's dead world and took Hela's message to the Aesir. Because they all loved Balder, they wept rivers of tears. They passed from deer to flower, from tree to stone; and all things cried for Balder.

Finally, however, they came to a cave in a wall of ice. At the mouth of the cave was a withered old hag.

"Old mother," the gods said, "won't you weep for Balder? Only the bitter tears of all the world can free him from death."

The old hag smiled through pointed teeth and said, "Why should I cry for him? He was not my friend. He did nothing for me. Let him stay in Hela's cold world." With that, she disappeared into the ice cave and would not come out again.

The Aesir knew then that Balder's gentle face would never again be seen in Asgard. They knew that the sun would soon

set on their world and there would be no peace for them without him. Shadows had already begun to grow from the mountains and the trees, and the white clouds were turning gray.

They hung their heads in sorrow and walked slowly to their homes in Asgard, which would no longer be so warm and comfortable. When the last god was gone from sight, the birds could hear Loki, laughing to himself inside the ice cave.

THE PUNISHMENT OF LOKI

Blow up a balloon and ask the students to describe it. Ask them what kind of a mood it creates. Then pop the balloon ahd hold the remains droopily in your hand. Ask your students to describe it now. Then ask your students how popping the balloon reminds them of what happened in the last story, "The Death of Balder." (Asgard was full of happiness and Balder was alive and well. Then Balder dies. After that, Asgard is dark and Balder is gone.)

Ask your students what they think causes earthquakes. Perhaps they will know something about the shifting of the earth's crust. If not, explain a little to them. Tell them that this is called a scientific explanation of earthquakes. Tell them that the Norse people did not have scientific explanations for why things like earthquakes and rainstorms happened. Instead they used their imaginations to come up with reasons for earthquakes. In this story, the students will learn what the ancient Norsemen thought caused earthquakes.

VOCABULARY

Sigunn - Loki's wife

venom - the poison liquid that comes from the fangs of a snake

REVIEW

Balder

Asgard

Aesir

Loki

Odin

Thor

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Do you think Sigunn should have helped Loki? (Discuss)

2. Do you think you would find Loki today if you looked in the Scandinavian countries? How do you account for the sentence: "Sigunn stays with Loki for all eternity"? (Explain "eternity," then discuss.)

ACTIVITIES

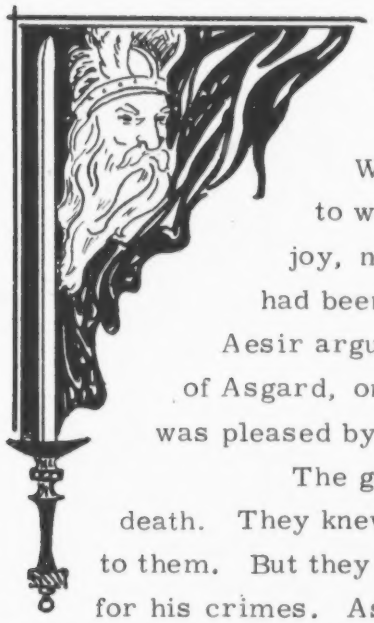
1. Compare Loki's and Prometheus's punishments: why they were punished, what their punishments were, whether they deserved their punishments.

2. "Because the gods were bound by the word of Odin and could not harm him, Loki grew bolder and even more wicked." This sentence seems to indicate that Loki did a lot of evil things in Asgard. Write about another wicked deed that Loki might have done, or draw a picture showing it.

3. Since this essentially is a myth that explains how earthquakes occur, students might enjoy trying to write a myth of their own explaining the origin of some other natural phenomena.

Ask students to write a myth (using Norse, or Greek, gods, or other characters as they wish) explaining the origin of a tornado, a cloudburst, a thunder storm, or a hurricane. Students may work in pairs if they wish.

Ask students to share their stories with another couple when they are finished.



THE PUNISHMENT OF LOKI

With Balder gone, life in Asgard began to wither. Where there had once been joy, now there was sorrow. Where there had been peace, now there was anger. The Aesir argued and fought among themselves. In all of Asgard, only Loki was happy. His evil heart was pleased by the misery he had brought.

The gods knew that Loki had caused Balder's death. They knew that he had kept Balder from returning to them. But they knew also that he could not be punished for his crimes. As long as Loki stayed in Asgard, he was safe. Odin's word had made it so.

So Loki stayed with his evil ways. Because the gods were bound by the word of Odin and could not harm him, Loki grew bolder and even more wicked. But finally Thor could no longer stand his insults. He grabbed Loki by the neck and shook him.

"Be still!" said Thor. "I have had enough! Be still, or my hammer will make you still!"

Fear rose in Loki's heart, and he shrank from Thor's grip. Before Thor could use his hammer, Loki broke loose and ran away, but not before he could shout another insult.

He ran fast and far, and he was soon outside the realm of Asgard. But he had made a mistake. The gods were no longer bound by Odin's word, because Loki was no longer in Asgard. They could hunt him, and catch him, and take their revenge.

Loki knew this, and he planned his escape well. Just as he had changed earlier into an old hag, he now changed into a salmon. In this shape, he hid at the bottom of a brook.

But Odin was the All-Father, and he could see everything. He saw that Loki was hiding in the brook, and he told the other gods. The Aesir mounted their horses and rode to the stream. Loki heard them coming and hid deeper in the mud. But the gods knew he was there.

Thor jumped into the brook and began to wade upstream. Loki felt more fear than he had ever felt before. Thor was getting closer and closer. There was nothing left for Loki to do. His only escape was to leap over Thor. He leaped high into the air, high over Thor, and splashed into the water downstream.

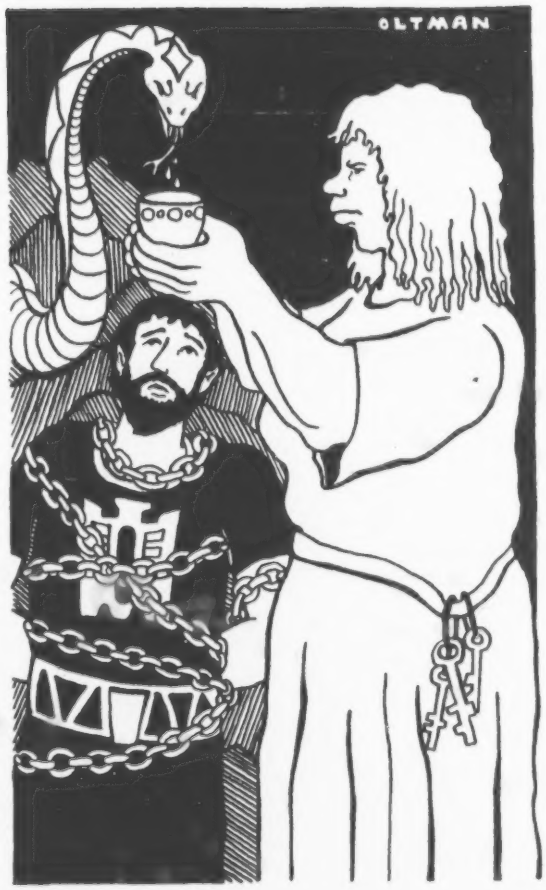
But this was no better for him. It was certain death for him to be carried into the ocean, and Thor waited above. All of his evil had trapped him; and his evil tricks could not save him. Again he tried his leap over Thor; but this time Thor was ready.

Thor reached up and caught him in midair. He squeezed the salmon-Loki as tight as he could, until Loki could stand it no longer. Thor held tight, and that is why salmon are smaller at the tail.

Loki cried out and turned back to his god form. The Aesir bound him and carried him to a deep cave. There, they chained him to a huge rock and hung a snake over his head.

The snake hissed and dropped its venom on Loki. Revenge was done, and the gods left him there.

Sigunn, Loki's wife, was the only friend he had. She stays with him for all eternity, and catches the poison in a silver cup. But the cup fills, and Sigunn must turn away to empty it. When she does, the venom falls on Loki. Loki twists and jumps so hard that the earth shakes, and men on earth take shelter. And that is why we have earthquakes today.



RAGNAROK: THE SUN SETS ON ASGARD

Turn to the picture of Loki's punishment. Ask the class to retell the story. Ask them why he was punished. This will get them to thinking about the "Death of Balder" story. Suggest that things go badly in Asgard in these two stories. Ask them why. (Prophecy) Ask them if it was always so bad in Asgard. Get them to recall the story of "Thor's Journey" and "The Theft of Thor's Hammer." Ask them which character changes the most from the beginning stories to the later stories. (Loki)

Turn to the picture of the final battle and discuss it with them a little. Tell them they will learn more about the picture as you read the story to them.

VOCABULARY

Balder

Hoder

Magni and Modi - sons of Thor

Vidar and Val - sons of Odin

Lifthrasir and Lif - a woman and a man

READ THE SELECTION

QUESTIONS

1. Where do you think Lifthrasir and Lif hid during the great battle?

2. Do you think this last story of the Norse mythology unit ends sadly or hopefully? Why? (There may be different opinions here.)

3. How might the forces of evil have destroyed Asgard <u>without</u> destroying themselves also? (Discuss)

ACTIVITY

This is a tragic myth, but students could be reminded that it is unfinished, since now the human race has begun.

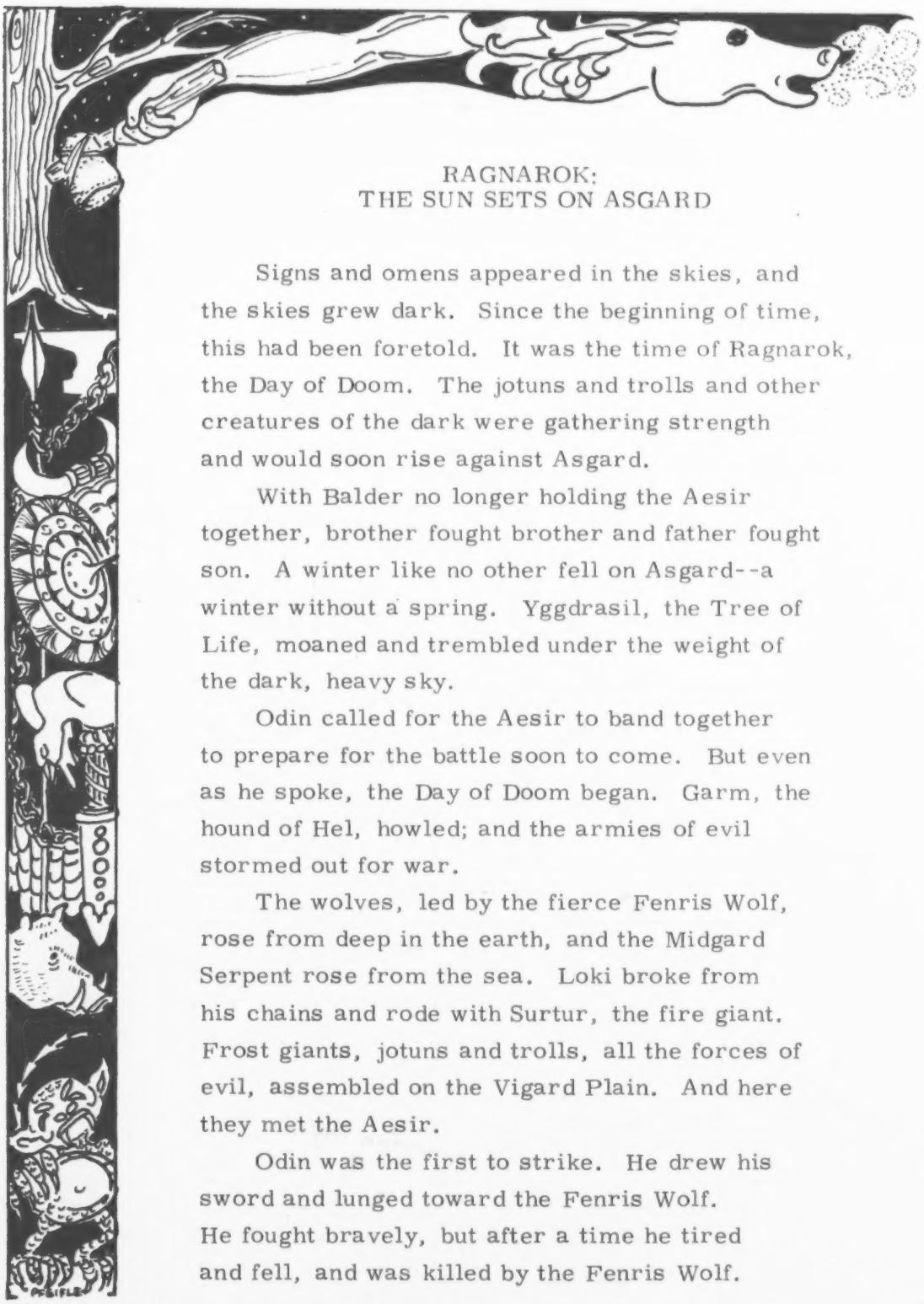
In composition, students will have a choice:

(1) To write a story about the four gods who remained, and what happened to them, or

(2) To tell one adventure of Lif and Lifthrasir, who founded "a good and happy race of men."

Remind students to include a beginning, a climax, and a definite end to their stories.

Ask volunteers to share with the class when they are finished.



RAGNAROK:
THE SUN SETS ON ASGARD

Signs and omens appeared in the skies, and the skies grew dark. Since the beginning of time, this had been foretold. It was the time of Ragnarok, the Day of Doom. The jotuns and trolls and other creatures of the dark were gathering strength and would soon rise against Asgard.

With Balder no longer holding the Aesir together, brother fought brother and father fought son. A winter like no other fell on Asgard--a winter without a spring. Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, moaned and trembled under the weight of the dark, heavy sky.

Odin called for the Aesir to band together to prepare for the battle soon to come. But even as he spoke, the Day of Doom began. Garm, the hound of Hel, howled; and the armies of evil stormed out for war.

The wolves, led by the fierce Fenris Wolf, rose from deep in the earth, and the Midgard Serpent rose from the sea. Loki broke from his chains and rode with Surtur, the fire giant. Frost giants, jotuns and trolls, all the forces of evil, assembled on the Vigard Plain. And here they met the Aesir.

Odin was the first to strike. He drew his sword and lunged toward the Fenris Wolf. He fought bravely, but after a time he tired and fell, and was killed by the Fenris Wolf.

Loki and Heimdall, the son of Odin, killed each other in a bloody battle. Thor killed the Midgard Serpent with his mighty hammer, but soon fell dead himself, poisoned by the Serpent's venom.

But the battle had just begun. It raged for weeks and months, and many were killed on both sides. Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, was split by the force of war and burned to ashes. The sun and the moon were eaten by wolves, and the stars fell from the sky. Finally the fire that devoured the world devoured also the Aesir as well as the forces of evil. And all the world lay in darkness, and the sea rose up to cover it.

Yet this was not the end of the world. As it had been foretold, the seas divided, and Balder returned from Hel with Hoder, his blind brother. Of all the gods, four remained: Magni and Modi, the sons of Thor, and Vidar and Vali, sons

of Odin. They lived and did well, but it was not as in the days of old.

Of all mankind, only two remained: Lif and Lifthrasir, man and woman, "Life" and "The Will to Live." They had hidden from the great battle and were saved. From these two, a new race of men would come to walk the earth--a good and happy race of men.

UNIT REVIEW

List all the stories in the unit on the board. Ask your students which story they liked best and why; which story they liked the least and why. Ask them which characters they liked and why; which characters they disliked and why.

Ask your students to draw or paint a picture of one part of one story that they especially liked. After they are finished, ask them to write an explanation of their picture or put a title right on the picture.

END